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JOHN JERVIS
EARL OF ST. VINCENT
Aetat 81

From an etching done by his great-niece, Martha Honoria Jervis, in October, 1816. The drawing shows the mole on the left cheek which was omitted in all Lord St. Vincent's painted portraits. He is also wearing a brown wig, and the star of the K.B. which he invariably displayed in civilian attire.

Men o' War

by

Captain Taprell Dorling, D.S.O., Royal Navy
(Taffrail)
Author of 'Sea Escapes and Adventures'

ST. VINCENT, COCHRANE, MARRYAT,
FISHER, BERESFORD

With a Foreword by
ADMIRAL SIR REGINALD CUSTANCE,
G.C.B., K.C.M.G., C.V.O., D.C.L.

"Spectemur agendo"

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FOREWORD

In *Men o' War* Captain Dorling has sketched the careers of five sea officers who were in the past much in the public eye. In doing so he has been fair and impartial and has threaded his way with care and discretion through the controversies in which such strong characters were involved. The result is an interesting and instructive book.

REGINALD CUSTANCE.

PREFACE

My method of selecting subjects for this volume of short biographies has not been entirely haphazard. I chose the Earl of St. Vincent because I have long since realised that, by the present generation of naval officers, he is rather misunderstood. Indeed, he seems to have passed down to posterity more as a strict disciplinarian who made no bones about hanging a mutineer on the Sabbath, than the man, and a very human one, who at one period was undoubtedly the mainstay of Europe. He raised the British Fleet from a condition of mediocrity to a state of high discipline and fighting efficiency the like of which the world had never previously known. Before the enemy ports of Toulon, Cadiz, and Brest, he inaugurated a new and more energetic method of naval war in the form of a rigorous blockade in all weathers. He gave Nelson his first independent command, and forged the weapon which enabled that greatest of British seamen to win his crowning triumph of Trafalgar. Nelson and his men fought the battle ; but the rugged old earl had created the fleet.

There is no modern admiral who can compare with the Earl of St. Vincent in the greatness of his achievement. One's mind, however, instinctively travels to the late Lord Fisher. In some respects they were not dissimilar in character and method. Both were ruthless, relentless, and remorseless in quelling opposition ; both were ardent reformers ; both became much-hated men during the process of reform. And while St. Vincent made the fleet which won Trafalgar, Fisher was largely responsible for the Navy which fought in the Great War. The work of both had an outstanding and lasting effect upon the great Service to which they belonged, while their respective careers afford interesting sidelights upon the history of the Navy at two periods a century apart. I need hardly apologise for introducing Lord Fisher.

The stormy and romantic career of Thomas, Lord Cochrane, afterwards the tenth Earl of Dundonald, has an interest and a fascination peculiarly its own. It reads more like a boy's adventure book than the story of a real life. Quarrelsome, insubordinate, and a firm believer in upholding his own rights,

Cochrane had a serious disagreement with Lord St. Vincent, and lost no opportunity of showing his disapproval of the earl, both in and out of Parliament, and for motives that, whatever he might say, were largely personal. He ruined his Service career through his misguided efforts to remedy naval abuses and his intractable attitude in regard to the vote of thanks to Lord Gambier in 1809; ruined his reputation, if only for a time, through his share in the Stock Exchange fraud of 1814. But with all his glaring faults he was a gallant fighter and seaman. Hitherto, however, the public estimate of his character has generally been formed upon two books for which he himself was responsible—*Narrative of Services in Chili, Péru, and Brazil*, and the better-known *Autobiography of a Seaman*. As I have endeavoured to show in my narrative, these two volumes cannot be accepted as altogether accurate.

I have included Frederick Marryat, the most famous of naval novelists, not merely because he spent the first few years of his life afloat under Cochrane's command in the *Impérieuse*; but because the year 1829 saw the publication of his first novel, *Frank Mildmay*, and he was probably the best recruiting agent the Royal Navy ever had. His career, of which little seems to be known to the general public, was also full of incident.

Lord Charles Beresford must also be mentioned as one of our best-known, certainly one of our most popular, modern admirals. He also was a sailor-politician, who was rather a thorn in the side of the Admiralty, while, towards the end of his career he had a serious disagreement with Lord Fisher.

My information has been obtained from many different sources. In writing the biography of the Earl of St. Vincent I have been greatly helped by Lieutenant-Colonel William Swynfen Whitehall Parker-Jervis, D.S.O., the Earl's great-great-great-nephew, and the present owner of Meaford, near Stone, Staffordshire, where the great seaman was born. Not only has he placed a mass of information and many letters at my disposal—letters referred to in footnotes or otherwise as 'Meaford Letters'; but through his courtesy I spent two most interesting days at Meaford. Through his kind assistance I have gathered much fresh material.

I am indebted to the Right Honourable Winston S. Churchill, P.C., C.H., M.P., who has most kindly permitted me to make use of certain matter concerning Admiral of the Fleet Lord Fisher, contained in his books *The World Crisis, 1911-1914*, and *The World Crisis, 1915*, without which valuable source of

information my sketch of another great seaman and reformer would necessarily have been incomplete. I must also thank the Right Honourable the Earl of Birkenhead for his permission to make use of an extract from his account of the trial of Lord Cochrane contained in *Famous Trials of History*, published by Messrs. Hutchinson in 1926, and am particularly grateful to Admiral Sir Reginald Custance, G.C.B., K.C.M.G., C.V.O., D.C.L., the well-known writer on naval war and strategy, who has taken the great trouble to read my book in its proof stage and to write a foreword.

In conclusion, I must own to a great admiration for all the notable sailors of whom I have written, for all were masters of their profession. But I have no axe to grind, and have tried throughout to be unprejudiced and impartial, to present a just estimate of their characters, their great qualities, and their purely human shortcomings.

1929. TAPRELL DORLING.

CONTENTS

	PAGE
John Jervis, Earl of St. Vincent, 1735–1823 .	1
Thomas, Lord Cochrane, 1776–1860 . . .	69
Frederick Marryat, 1792–1848 . . .	173
John Fisher, 1841–1920	217
Lord Charles Beresford, 1846–1919 . . .	259

ILLUSTRATIONS

LORD ST. VINCENT. (Pencil Sketch) . . *Frontispiece*

LORD ST. VINCENT. SPECIMEN LETTER . . *facing p.* 52

PHOTOGRAPH OF LORD ST. VINCENT'S BIRTHPLACE . 66

COCHRANE AS CAPTAIN OF "SPEEDY" 86

COCHRANE AS ADMIRAL OF THE GREEK NAVY . . 164

FREDERICK MARRYAT 206

LORD FISHER 250

LORD CHARLES BERESFORD 304

JOHN JERVIS
EARL OF ST. VINCENT
Admiral of the Fleet
1735–1823

JOHN JERVIS

I

'SIR,—

'You having thought fit to take to yourself a wife, are to look for no further attentions from

'Your humble servant

'J. JERVIS.'

This 'rather chuffish note,' as one biographer puts it, was addressed in 1793 to Lieutenant H. W. Bayntun,[1] who had been shipmates with Jervis before and had applied for an appointment in a new command. His feelings at receiving the curt refusal can be better imagined than described. He was not even contemplating matrimony!

Replying 'in all astonishment,' he ventured to ask the admiral 'who could have so traduced him . . . for that he abhorred the idea as much as Sir John did.'

Explanations were forthcoming. Lady Jervis had misdirected the letter, and the young Benedick who had received the favourable answer intended for Bayntun was forced to exchange it for the rebuff.

John Jervis,[2] afterwards Admiral of the Fleet the Right Honourable John, Earl of St. Vincent, First Lord of the Admiralty from 1801 to 1804; General of the Royal Marines, a Privy Councillor in Great Britain, Knight Grand Cross of the Most Honourable Order of the Bath, and of the Portuguese Order of the Tower and Sword, was one of the most remarkable characters that have ever trodden the quarter-deck of a man-of-war.

He himself had not been united in the bonds of holy matrimony until the respectable age of forty-eight, and stigmatised as 'moonstruck' those younger officers who thought fit to tie themselves to woman. Indeed, he went

[1] Lieutenant Bayntun became a post-captain in 1794, and was captain of the *Leviathan* at Trafalgar. He took his chief's advice to heart, and did not marry until the age of forty-three. He died an admiral and a G.C.B. in 1840.

[2] The name is pronounced precisely as spelt; not, as it is often heard, as 'Jarvis.'

further, for considering that sea officers should be wedded to their profession, he regarded marriage as a nautical misdemeanour. Wives, who sometimes undermined their husbands' sense of duty, prevailed upon them to apply for leave when they should have been busy on board their ships, and provided a comfortable home ashore which acted as a powerful counter-attraction to the stark discomfort of life afloat, were anathema.

'May the discipline of the Mediterranean never be introduced into the Channel Fleet!' was the toast drunk by the Channel Fleet captains when, in 1800, it was known that Lord St. Vincent was about to become their commander-in-chief.

'May his next glass of wine choke the wretch!' was the toast given at a gathering of naval wives at one of the refitting ports, when St. Vincent, to make them set an example and to prevent wholesale desertion among the seamen, forbade his captains and all their officers to sleep ashore on any pretext whatsoever while their ships were under repair.

Hear St. Vincent himself, in writing to his secretary on the subject of one wife whose husband had dared to protest at this order and had threatened his resignation :

'I wish you, in conversation with Mrs. ——,' he said, 'to impress upon her mind that the duty of a captain of a first-rate is incessant, requiring the most constant unremitting attention. . . . That, in short, his whole soul and body should be in it, which, with his wife and family near him, never has been, nor can be ; and that he sets a very improper example in all points, at this period ; and unless both she and her husband can make up their minds to be content in separation during the war, it would be very unwise and unjust, both to the Service and to me, for him to delay for one day his intention, if such should still lurk in his or her mind, of retiring.'

Thus the stern old seaman who inculcated a new discipline into the Mediterranean Fleet, was ruthless in quelling mutiny before Cadiz, had not hesitated to inspire terror among the malcontents by hanging a mutineer on the Sabbath, and now found himself forced to turn his attention to what, and not unfairly, he considered laxity of discipline on the part of the officers of his new command.

'Old Jarvie,' as the men called him, was harsh in his austerity, careless of other people's feelings, and something of a tyrant. With him there was little of the 'band-of-brothers' feeling which characterised Nelson's dealings with those under his command. His rebukes were as frequent, bitter, and

incisive as his will was indomitable. He did not hesitate to 'break' those who withstood him. As one who knew him well observed, he was far 'from preserving an unruffled command of his temper or of himself, and on some occasions of unofficerlike or unseamanlike conduct, or when retarded by laziness or factiousness, a torrent of impetuous reproof in unmeasured language would violently rush from his unguarded lips.'

His ruthlessness made him many enemies. But what with war; corruption in every branch of naval administration; inefficiency among senior officers; mutiny smouldering on the lower-decks of his fleet and ready at any moment to break out into the flame of open rebellion; loose talk and disloyalty to himself in the wardrooms and even higher places, severity was precisely what was needed. It cannot be said that Nelson was St. Vincent's pupil except perhaps from the point of view of discipline. Nevertheless, it was St. Vincent's will and training that forged the weapon which eventually won Trafalgar.

It was in 1795,[1] when Jervis was commander-in-chief in the Mediterranean, that he first came into official contact with Nelson, then the comparatively obscure captain of the *Agamemnon*. Though not admiring his subordinate's vanity,[2]

[1] It has been stated that Nelson first met Jervis in the Mediterranean in 1795; but everything goes to prove that this was not the case. Maurice Suckling, Nelson's maternal uncle, was first lieutenant of the *Gloucester*, Jervis's first ship. Nelson, it will be remembered, subsequently married Mrs. Nisbet, widow of Doctor Nisbet, of the island of Nevis, while Mary, Jervis's youngest sister, married W. H. Ricketts, of Jamaica. Jervis probably first met Nelson's future wife in the West Indies, and it is known that he remained her friend through life and was instrumental in securing her rights under Nelson's will in 1805. It is also highly probable that the families knew each other socially in England a considerable time before Jervis was appointed commander-in-chief in the Mediterranean.

[2] One does not wish unnecessarily to impugn the private character of a national hero and a very great man; but Nelson's private failings are matters of common knowledge. His greatness shines through his purely human weaknesses, and this was recognised by his contemporaries, particularly the Earl of St. Vincent. Two of the earl's letters written as commander-in-chief of the Channel Fleet sum up his opinion of Nelson's private failings. They were written to Sir Evan Nepean, Secretary of the Admiralty, who had been his purser in the *Foudroyant* twenty years before and remained his intimate friend. They were intended to be private; but copies are to be found in a letter-book of the earl's preserved at the British Museum. (*Add. MSS.* 31173.)

Writing from Tor Abbey on November 9th, 1800, Lord St. Vincent says: 'It is evident from Lord Nelson's letter to you on his landing, that he is doubtful of the propriety of his conduct. I have no doubt he is pledged to getting Lady H. received at St. James's and everywhere, and that he will get into much *Brouillerie* about it. Troubridge says Lord Spencer talks of putting him in a two-deck ship. If he does, he must give him a separate command, for he cannot bear confinement

love of display, and moral shortcomings, he quickly and accurately gauged his inestimable worth as a fighting seaman, and admired his willingness to take responsibility. This, above all things, was what St. Vincent most desired, but so rarely found, in his subordinate flag-officers. On his own judgment he chose him for those daring, independent services which presently made the name of Nelson famous, and caused him, the younger man, to outshine him, the older veteran, in the eyes of his countrymen.

The two men, so dissimilar in personal character, and in spite of a formal law-suit about prize-money in 1800, remained fast friends until Nelson's death at Trafalgar.

'My dear Lord, our St. Vincent!' wrote Nelson on June 12th, 1799, 'what have we suffered in hearing of your illness, and of your return to Mahon! but we entreat you to come to us with a force fit to fight . . . we shall have so much pleasure in fighting under the eye of our ever great and good earl. If you are sick, I will fag for you, and our dear Lady Hamilton will nurse you with the most affectionate attention. Good Sir William will make you laugh with his wit and inexhaustible pleasantry. We all love you. Come then to your sincere friends. Let us get you well, it will be such a happiness to us all—amongst the foremost, to your attached, faithful, and affectionate Nelson.'

'God bless you, my dear Lord,' St. Vincent, when First Lord of the Admiralty, wrote to Nelson on March 1st, 1801, 'be assured that no man loves and esteems you more than your very affectionate St. Vincent.'

'Be assured,' he says, in a letter seven days later, 'that *every public act of your life*[1] has been the subject of my admiration.' Again on May 19th and 31st respectively, 'Every increase of glory and honour to you is a delight to my mind,'

to any Object; he is a Partizan; his ship always in the most dreadful disorder, and never can become an officer fit to be placed where I am.'

Again, from Tor Abbey, on January 17th, 1801: 'Nelson was very low when he first came here, the day before yesterday; appeared and acted as if he had done me an injury, and felt apprehension that I was acquainted with it; Poor Man! he is devour'd with vanity, weakness, and folly, and strung with ribbons, Medals, etc., and yet pretended that he wished to avoid the honors and ceremonies, he everywhere met with upon the road.'

Both these letters were written when the earl was in a very poor state of health, and after a disagreement with his illustrious subordinate. Moreover, Lord St. Vincent hated display and ostentation. His remarks may therefore err on the side of severity, and the statements that Nelson was a 'Partizan,' and that his ship was always in a state of 'dreadful disorder,' are generally considered to be undeserved. Nelson ruled his men by kindness rather than by severity, and they responded.

[1] The italics are mine.—'Taffrail.'

'Your Lordship's whole conduct, from your first appointment to this hour, is the subject of our constant admiration ; it does not become me to make comparisons. All agree there is but one Nelson ; that he may long continue the pride of his Country is the fervent wish of your Lordship's truly affectionate St. Vincent.'

Beneath 'Old Jarvie's' rugged exterior, incisive utterances, and frigid courtesy and punctilio, however, there lurked a sense of grim humour and an immense understanding of mankind. He was dour, quick-tempered, peremptory in manner, and impatient. He spared neither himself nor others. Even as First Lord of the Admiralty, at the age of sixty-six, his usual hours of audience were from 5 until 7 a.m. After his retirement from active service to his country seat at Rochetts, in Essex, sixteen miles from London, he was up and prowling about his little estate soon after daybreak, and expected his male guests to rise at six. The ladies were suffered to remain in bed until later.

Throughout his career his soul was filled with the clear fire of loyal duty to his country. His rigid enforcement of discipline and ceremonial were merely means to an end, and if he did not wear his heart upon his coat sleeve for all the world to see, it beat none the less strongly for those who observed his own rigid code, and the lucky few whom he cherished as his friends.

2

John Jervis was born at a house called 'Meaford,'[1] near Stone, in Staffordshire, on January 20th, 1734–5. He was the son of Swynfen Jervis, barrister-at-law, who had married Elizabeth, daughter of George Parker, of Park Hall, in the same county. His uncle on his mother's side, Thomas, afterwards Sir Thomas Parker, Chief Baron of the Exchequer, was married twice and had three children. It was the only child of the second marriage, Martha, his cousin, whom the future Earl of St. Vincent married in 1783.

Mrs. Jervis, John's mother, had the reputation of being a great disciplinarian and very severe. It seems certain that the future earl inherited a number of his characteristics from her. Her portrait, by Kneller, still hangs in the house in which he was born. It shows a lady of rather austere expression,

[1] Meaford, pronounced 'Meffud.' A derivation of May Ford, from a ford over the River Trent, visible from the house, which formerly existed on the main coachroad between Stoke-upon-Trent and London. Now replaced by a bridge.

so it is more than probable that the story of John's two sisters having to curtsey to the painting every time they passed it on the stairs, has its foundation in fact.

In 1747 Swynfen Jervis, for reasons which need not be detailed here, was appointed counsel to the Admiralty and auditor of Greenwich Hospital, which necessitated the family leaving Staffordshire for the time being, and migrating to Greenwich. John, like his father and many of his family, was intended to become a lawyer, and attended a local school. At Greenwich, however, he found himself in a naval atmosphere, and partly because of this, partly because his father's hired coachman loved the sea and is said to have stigmatised 'all lawyers as rogues,' the youngster became fired with an ambition to join the Navy.

Such a step was entirely against his parents' wishes. They refused their consent ; but towards the end of 1747, knowing his own mind, he ran away from school. Remonstrances were useless. The boy was obdurate, and, realising that further opposition was futile, his father used what influence he had to give him a start in his chosen profession.

Writing from the Middle Temple on April 26th, 1748, to his wife, Swynfen Jervis says : 'Tell my dear Boy I hope soon to provide for him to his own content and could wish he would think of some way to improve himself as will be most agreeable to himself, and I will grudge him no expense.'

It was in January 1747–8, thanks to the good offices of Lady Burleigh, that the future admiral of the fleet, at the tender age of thirteen, was entered as an able seaman, then one of the recognised methods of joining the Navy as an officer, on board the *Gloucester*, of fifty guns. On November 1st this ship was commissioned by Commodore Honourable George Townshend, who had been appointed senior officer at Jamaica.

We are told by some of St. Vincent's biographers that twenty pounds was all that his father could afford for his son's outfit and pocket money, and that, for the next five or six years, he was forced to live in a state of penury in the none too salubrious climate of Jamaica. It has further been stated that the original twenty pounds given him by his father being spent, young Jervis drew a bill on his parent for a similar sum after an interval of three years, and that the bill being returned dishonoured, he was brought up against poverty in its acutest form.

To make good the sum, he is stated to have exchanged from ship to ship to obtain his pay tickets, which he cashed at 40

per cent. discount ; to have sold his bedding and slept upon the bare deck ; sometimes to have made and mended his own clothes ; invariably to have done his own washing ; never to have eaten fresh meat, and to have bartered what he could save of his scanty service rations for fruit and vegetables.

Though these anecdotes doubtless contain a substratum of truth, they were told by St. Vincent to his biographers at a later period of his life when the recollections of his youth were blurred and nebulous. It is true that his pay as an A.B. until August 1752 would have been no more than 22*s.* 6*d.* a month, and afterwards, in the rating of midshipman, only two pounds. We know, moreover, that the *Gloucester* spent most of her time as guardship at Jamaica, and that Jervis, finding himself among a set of harum-scarum boys, with ample opportunity of spending money ashore, probably had the greatest difficulty in making two ends meet. What midshipman has not ?

Partly to gain experience, partly to economise, he certainly volunteered to go to any ship that was sent to sea, where he spent what leisure he had in learning navigation. He was finally discharged from the *Gloucester* to the *Severn* on June 26th, 1752, became a midshipman on August 3rd, and the next year writes to Mary (Molly), his youngest sister, afterwards Mrs. Ricketts, from the *Sphinx*, to say, ' there are many entertainments and public assemblies here, but they are rather above my sphere, many inconveniences and expenses attending them, so that my chief employ, when from my duty, is reading, studying navigation, and perusing my old letters. . . . ' ' Pleasures here,' he says in another letter, ' are so dear-bought that I seldom or ever partake of them.'

But in simple justice to his father, Swynfen Jervis, I cannot but think that the incident of the dishonoured bill for twenty pounds is capable of another explanation than mere parental hard-heartedness. Swynfen Jervis was not a poor man. He had probably been told by his naval friends that a boy at sea with too much pocket money was a danger to himself. It was understood that a young officer could not exist on his pay, and it was the accepted custom for a parent to pay his son's commanding officer a certain quarterly allowance, which the captain doled out as he thought fit.

Young Jervis was probably extravagant beyond his means, and his father—perhaps on the advice of his son's captain—threw the bill for twenty pounds back at the youngster to be met out of his allowance in the hope that the lesson would do

him good. In short, it was a punishment and a piece of parental discipline, and Jervis never forgot it. There is no doubt that this early teaching of the value of money played no small part in moulding his character, and in fostering that sturdy independence of spirit which marked him through life.

Returning to England at the end of 1754, he completed the few months of service necessary to qualify him for the rank of lieutenant, passed the examination with credit, and received his commission on February 19th, 1755. His first appointment was as sixth lieutenant of the *Royal George*, where he remained less than a month, being transferred on March 12th to the *Nottingham*, where he served for a year with Boscawen. From March 31st, 1756, until June 24th, he was in the *Devonshire*, and, on the day following, transferred to the *Prince*, Captain Charles Saunders, in the Mediterranean. It was during his Mediterranean service, while in temporary command of the 20-gun sloop *Experiment*, that he had the opportunity of showing his mettle in a smart action with a French privateer mounting 26 guns and carrying a crew far larger than his own.

Captain Saunders, afterwards Vice-Admiral Sir Charles Saunders, K.B., had been Anson's first lieutenant in the *Centurion* during her voyage round the world between 1740 and 1744. Anson himself, who was First Lord of the Admiralty in 1751, and again from 1757 to 1762, was Jervis's distant connection on his mother's side.

Jervis's uncle also became Chief Baron of the Exchequer, and his elder brother a gentleman usher of the King's Privy Chamber. So in spite of the fact that the young officer had exceptional merit, it is idle to pretend that his career was not helped on in some degree by influence in high places. It was an age when many able men were left behind in the race for promotion through lack of interest and opportunity.

It was Saunders who took young Jervis under his wing and ensured his advancement, for on January 15th, 1759, when he hoisted his flag as Vice-Admiral in the *Neptune*, 90 guns, as naval commander-in-chief of the expedition against the French at Quebec, Jervis again went with him as first lieutenant. On July 4th he was transferred as acting commander to the sloop *Porcupine*. In this vessel, with General Sir James Wolfe on board, he led the transports laden with troops past the city under the heavy fire of the French guns to the landing-place

higher up the river. Wolfe[1] and Jervis had shared the same tutor at Greenwich, and on the night before the assault, the soldier, who had a strong presentiment of death, gave Jervis a miniature of his fiancée with the request that it should be returned to her if he were killed. Actually the miniature was delivered to Miss Lowther by Captain Bell, Wolfe's A.D.C.

After the capture of Quebec, Jervis transferred to the *Scorpion* and returned to England, and presently received orders to take important despatches to New York. The *Scorpion*, which afterwards foundered at sea, was old and rotten, and on leaving Spithead ran into a gale of wind which opened her seams and caused her to make so much water that her young commander was forced to put into Plymouth. Representing the unseaworthiness of his command and the importance of his mission to the port admiral, he was directed to transfer to the *Albany*, a sloop lying in Plymouth Sound. He joined her on May 22nd, 1760.

Employed in the coastal convoy service, the *Albany* had been a long time in commission. Considerable arrears of pay were due to her men, who by no means relished the prospect of a sudden voyage across the stormy North Atlantic. Orders to heave up the anchor and make sail resulted in the crew rushing aft in a body and voicing their objections in no uncertain manner. Finding remonstrance useless, Jervis, who had brought his boat's crew from the *Scorpion*, ordered these few loyal men to cut the cables and then sent them aloft to loose the canvas. The *Albany's* men were cowed into submission and the ship proceeded, the ringleaders in the revolt being severely punished. To some extent they have our sympathy ; but it was Jervis's first taste of mutiny, and his firmness saved the situation.[2]

The *Albany* was detained for some time in America owing to a rebellion among the Indians. The delay was a great disappointment to Jervis, for Admiral Saunders had been appointed commander-in-chief in the Mediterranean and had promised to take his protégé as his flag-captain. In his absence, Saunders was forced to nominate somebody else, and for the time being Jervis lost his chance of promotion. On October 13th, 1760, however, at the relatively early age of

[1] Wolfe was Jervis's senior by seven years ; but from 1737 onwards his family lived at Greenwich.

[2] This story of the mutiny in the *Albany* has been denied, but is here inserted as containing some degree of truth.

twenty-five, he was ' posted,' or promoted to captain, and five days later was appointed to the *Gosport*, a fifth-rate of 44 guns. His pay, according to a reference book of the period, would have amounted to eight shillings a day.

In his new ship he was employed in convoy work in the North Atlantic, and with a squadron under Lord Colville which blockaded an enemy squadron in St. John's, Newfoundland, that island having been occupied by a French expeditionary force. The hostile squadron escaped during a fog ; but on the arrival of British troops the French garrison capitulated. Returning to England in the *Gosport*, Jervis continued to command her, principally in convoying trade to and from the Baltic, until the close of the war in 1763. For the next six years he remained unemployed.

But he had made a certain amount of money over and above his pay, for on January 26th, 1763, he writes to his sister from the *Gosport*, at Cork, to say, ' . . . I forgot to tell you in my last very imperfect letter that my freight from America will add near one thousand pounds to my little store, if Lord Colville does not share a part. Be that as it may, I hope to sit down with two thousand five hundred pounds which (considering how many of my brother officers are rather sufferers than gainers by the war) is no uncomfortable addition to my half-pay.'

From February 12th, 1769, until July 8th, 1772, Jervis was in command of the 32-gun frigate *Alarm*[1] in the Mediterranean, though except for an isolated incident or two the humdrum monotony of a peace-time commission calls for no detailed description.

Soon after her arrival on the station the *Alarm* was at anchor off Genoa. One Sunday afternoon her boat happened to be alongside the quay, when two Turkish galley slaves who had been allowed ashore from their vessel farther along the mole, leapt suddenly into the stern-sheets, wrapped themselves in the British ensign, and declared themselves free men. A Genoese officer on duty ordered their removal, and during the struggle that ensued one of the slaves tore away a portion of the boat's pendant. The incident, being reported to Jervis, was regarded by him as an insult to the flag.

He insisted upon the punishment of the Genoese officer and an apology on the quarter-deck of the *Alarm* for ' the outrage offered to the British nation.' The apology was forthcoming and the slaves were liberated, though for his rather high-handed

[1] The first copper-sheathed frigate in the Navy.

action in a friendly port Jervis received a not altogether undeserved reprimand from the Admiralty.[1]

At Marseilles, in April 1770, the *Alarm* parted her cables during a gale of wind, drove ashore, and nearly became a total loss. She was got off with the assistance of the French port officer, Lieutenant Pleville de Pelly, afterwards French Minister of Marine, who was presented with a piece of plate by the Admiralty.[2]

It is unnecessary to describe the visits to the *Alarm* of the Duke of Chablais, brother of the King of Sardinia, or Prince William Henry, Duke of Gloucester, brother of George III, then aged twenty-nine, upon whom the *Alarm* was ordered to attend during a visit to Italy for his health.

Jedediah Stephens Tucker, one of Jervis's biographers and the son of his future secretary, however, devotes considerable space to the association of Jervis with the prince.

'The selection' (of Jervis) 'itself is to be noted,' he writes sycophantically, 'because, advantageous as it always is to England for her diplomatic interferences, that the naval officers in the Mediterranean, of all stations, should unite courtliness of demeanour with professional efficiency, more especially was it so then, for the one who was to appear with a prince of the royal blood at every Italian court. For the officer and frigate for such service the Admiralty would search among the choicest.'

'The circles in society,' he goes on to say, 'as well of each State as of the English who crowded there, in which he' (Jervis) 'moved, were of the highest quality. But such luxury did not enervate the moral energy of the individual it environed. . . . But he so gained the esteem of his royal charge, and those of his countrymen among whom he was thrown, that he became their intimate friend and associate; while, by regularly communicating to his own family all his proceedings,

[1] 'I sometime ago had an opportunity of carrying the Dignity of the British Flag, in relation to two Turkish slaves, as high as a Blake had ever done, for which I am publickly censured, tho' I hope we have too much virtue left for me not at least to be justified in private. It is too long a story (myself the Hero) to relate here.' (Letter to his brother William of January 21st, 1770.) (Meaford Letters.)

[2] 'It would not become me, who am the Hero of the Tale, to relate the disaster to ye *Alarm*; it will serve for a little parlour conversation when we meet; I am superior to it, and shall rise ten times greater from the event, than if it had not happened.' (Letter to his brother William of April 27th, 1770.) (Meaford Letters.)

'I have received the most satisfactory letter from the Adm'ty publick and private, a glorious action in the midst of war could not have been more applauded than the gallantry of the Officers and Company of the *Alarm* for theirs. . . .' (Letter to his father of May 11th, 1770.) (Meaford Letters.)

he endeavoured, as far as he could, to participate with them his pleasures and increased personal consequence. . . . The Duke of Gloucester quitted the frigate . . . with a heart overflowing with thankfulness for the unalloyed pleasure which he had enjoyed on board.'

Such high-falutin nonsense would have been little to Jervis's own taste. He was still a poor man, and the prince's entertainment was expensive. 'By great economy,' he says, 'my own pocket supported myself, and maintained my independence,' though 'I could not afford to purchase anything' in the way of curiosities or works of art.

Jervis visited Rome in April 1772, and on the 18th writes home to say, 'Tell Mrs. Fitzherbert when you see her I have had two benedictions from the Pope, who patted my face and called me Anima Bella. What would she give for such a happiness.'[1]

The *Alarm* returned to England and paid off in July, and her captain, with another spell of unemployment to which to look forward, first visited France to learn the language,[2] and then voyaged in a merchant-ship to Russia, Sweden, Norway, and Denmark. From Copenhagen he travelled to Holland through Lübeck and Hamburg, and the next year, in a yacht, sailed to Brest and coasted so far south as Bordeaux, acquiring information and local knowledge of the various harbours and anchorages that might one day be useful to him.

3

Jervis did not take part in the war against America which broke out in 1774. It was not until the year following, on the

[1] The celebrated beauty, Mrs. Fitzherbert, afterwards the morganatic wife of George IV. At the time when Jervis writes, the lady was the wife of Mr. Thomas Fitzherbert of Swynnerton, Staffordshire ; and was a frequent visitor at Meaford, Jervis's birthplace and home. Mrs. Fitzherbert was a Roman Catholic.

[2] Prince William Henry had secretly married in 1766 Maria dowager Countess of Waldegrave, a daughter of Sir Edward Walpole, widow of the second Earl Waldegrave, and a lady of great wit and beauty. The secret was kept, though the Court had its suspicions. It was not until the passing of the Royal Marriages Act that Prince William, in September 1772, informed the King of his previous marriage. The prince was at once banished from Court, and the King ordered an enquiry into the validity of the marriage, both parties to it being examined before three commissioners on May 23rd, 1773. Its validity was allowed, and provision made for the children five years later. It is more than probable that Jervis, having been on intimate terms with Prince William Henry in the *Alarm*, went abroad at the prince's request to avoid giving evidence at the enquiry.

imminence of a fresh struggle with France, that he was appointed for a few months to the *Kent*, and, on September 1st, 1775, to the *Foudroyant*, an 80-gun ship captured from the French seventeen years before, and reputed to be the finest two-decker in the British Navy.

In this vessel he was immediately astern of the *Victory*, flagship of Admiral Hon. Augustus Keppel, in the indecisive battle with the French, under Count D'Orvilliers, off Ushant on July 27th, 1778. The *Foudroyant*, as warmly engaged as any ship, had five killed and eighteen wounded.

It is no part of our business to describe in detail the undignified quarrel as to the conduct of the action which subsequently took place between Keppel and Vice-Admiral Sir Hugh Palliser, his second-in-command. It was productive of more party clamour and acrimonious invective, however, than perhaps any other such disagreement in our naval history, and, for this reason, is of more than passing interest.

Both officers were gallant fighters. Both were members of Parliament, though on opposite sides of the House. But while Palliser was a member of the Board of Admiralty and *persona grata* with the First Lord, Keppel was rather regarded as an officer who had been forced upon the government as commander-in-chief because of his general popularity in the country and the Navy.

The dispute between them started by a paragraph under an assumed name in the *Morning Intelligencer*, which stated that the French fleet had escaped through Palliser's disobedience of Keppel's signals. Palliser, at the first opportunity, requested Keppel to sign a paper denying the accusation, which the latter refused to do as being derogatory to his position as commander-in-chief. An interview between them met with no result. Palliser therefore published his own defence, and the matter coming up in the House, where Keppel spoke on his own behalf and did not exculpate his second-in-command, was treated as a party question.

Palliser's next step was to frame five charges of misconduct and neglect against Keppel which he sent to the Admiralty. Feeling in the country and in Parliament ran high, and the Admiralty ordered Keppel's trial by court-martial. At the trial, where Jervis gave evidence strongly in his favour,[1] Keppel was honourably acquitted, the charge against him being found

[1] Jervis was described by Lord Sandwich, at this period, as 'a good officer, but turbulent and busy, and violent as a politician, attached to Mr. Keppel.'

' malicious and ill-founded.' So great was the public rejoicing on the verdict, that Portsmouth and parts of London were illuminated, and bonfires were lit in the streets. Drunken mobs raided the houses of Palliser's friends, destroyed the furniture, and had to be turned out by soldiers. Palliser's own house in Pall Mall was partly demolished and he himself barely escaped with his life. Keppel, meanwhile, received a vote of thanks from both Houses and the freedom of the City of London.

Palliser, in the face of the popular clamour, was forced to resign his seat on the Board of Admiralty, his seat in the House of Commons, and his lucrative appointment as Lieutenant-General of Marines. He was tried by court-martial ' as there appeared several circumstances, in the minutes of the trial of Admiral Keppel, of a criminating nature against him,' and though acquitted, the court expressed the opinion that he had not helped his commander-in-chief during the engagement by all the means in his power.

His career was virtually ruined. Keppel was subsequently First Lord of the Admiralty in 1782.

This unsavoury and unprofitable quarrel, so contrary to the tradition of the Navy and so injurious to its discipline, provides a glaring example of the extreme undesirability of political influence and intrigue being allowed to interfere in the internal affairs of the Service, and of naval officers, no matter what their rank, voicing their personal grievances in the public press. Nowadays, of course, and happily, it is impossible for an officer on full pay also to be a member of Parliament. Still less is it possible for any officer, like Palliser, to hold an active appointment at sea, to be a member of the Board of Admiralty, and to be an M.P., all at the same time.

To revert to John Jervis.

During the four years that the war with France continued he remained in the *Foudroyant* in the Channel Fleet under its successive commanders-in-chief, and it was in 1782 that there came his first real chance of distinction.

On April 20th, close to Ushant, a British detachment under Admiral Barrington sighted an enemy fleet. The signal was made for a general chase, and the *Foudroyant*, being an excellent sailer, soon left her consorts far astern. At about 10 p.m. the French ships scattered ; but, selecting the largest, Jervis shadowed and chased her until midnight, by which time he was close on her heels. It was blowing hard. Both vessels, with the wind on their starboard quarter, were running at a speed of

eleven knots, and at seventeen minutes past the hour the Frenchman was brought to action. Jervis's superior seamanship and gunnery stood him in good stead, and, after a fierce engagement lasting for three-quarters of an hour, he boarded the enemy on the port quarter and was soon in possession. She proved to be the *Pégase*, of 74 guns, commanded, as luck would have it, by an old acquaintance, Captain the Chevalier de Cillart. She had suffered badly in her hull and rigging, and had lost eighty men killed and forty wounded. In the *Foudroyant*, only Jervis himself and five men were slightly wounded. It is only fair to state that the *Pégase* was newly commissioned and manned largely by levies of raw landsmen.

'My uncle'—wrote William Henry Ricketts, the son of Jervis's youngest sister, Mary, then a young midshipman on his first cruise—'my uncle has got a splinter, which has made both his eyes black, but he is very well; it is upon the top of his nose.'

'What a noble creature,' wrote Admiral Barrington, in referring to Jervis. 'He, poor fellow, has got an honourable mark above his eye, which I conceive will be of no bad consequence, rather the reverse, for, as a man of middle age, it may make his fortune. The fair honour the brave, and we suppose delight in kissing the honourable mark.'

Jervis, let it be noted, was still a bachelor.

For this spirited engagement he was rewarded on May 29th, 1782, with the 'red riband,' otherwise the K.B., or Knighthood of the Most Honourable Order of the Bath.[1] Apart from a baronetcy or peerage, or, in the case of junior officers, promotion, it was then the only available honour for naval or military prowess.

In the same year the *Foudroyant* was one of the fleet sent out under Lord Howe to relieve Gibraltar, and on Christmas Day, 1782, on the virtual cessation of hostilities, the ship was paid off.

During the time Jervis had been in command of her he had achieved the reputation of a stern disciplinarian, and the *Foudroyant* that of one of the smartest line-of-battleships in the Service. And he did not unbend or relax his sternness even in the case of his own relations.

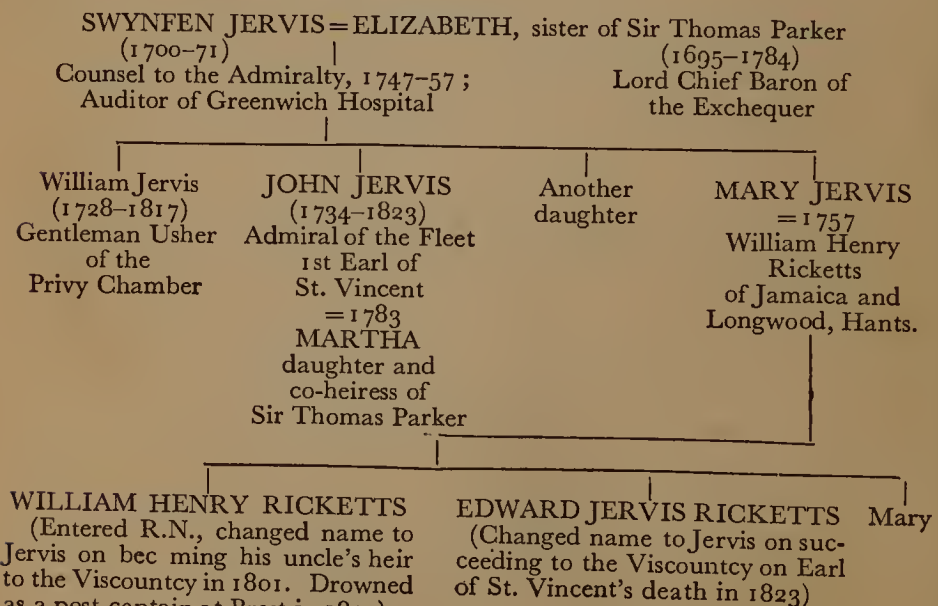
On August 29th, 1780, he writes to his sister Molly, Mrs.

[1] It was not until 1815 that the Prince Regent—afterwards George IV—created three classes of the Order of the Bath: Knights Grand Cross, Knights Commanders and Companions. Prior to this the Order had only one class.

Ricketts, in regard to her boy Edward,[1] who wished to join the ship as a midshipman.

'His choice of our profession must be entirely his own,' he says. '. . . I do not encourage it by any means . . . he must lie in the berth with the other midshipmen, live as they do, and have no distinction whatsoever; for the first year, he must rise at break of day, and apply closely to his studies, and to his seamanship; be very subordinate and respectful to all in authority over him, and never repine at the hardships and impositions he is bound to bear in common with others. The life's a very rigorous one, and what few boys, educated as he has been, can bear. If he chooses to embark on these terms, I shall be ready to receive him; but if he disgraces me and his family afterwards, by turning his back, I shall bury in total oblivion his alliance in blood (which is no tie to me when unaccompanied by manly virtues), and have no other feeling about him than I should have for any other indifferent person committed to my care, who acted in such a manner as not to merit my esteem and regard. I forgot to mention, that, after the first year, in which I expect he will become master of the

[1] Edward Jervis Ricketts. He served for a short time at sea, but retired through ill-health and became a barrister. In about 1801, Earl St. Vincent obtained a patent of viscountcy, with a collateral limitation, to himself and his male heirs lawfully begotten, and in default, to the children of his younger sister Mary, by her marriage with W. H. Ricketts, Esq., of Jamaica. The genealogical tree below shows the position more clearly.


SWYNFEN JERVIS (1700–71) Counsel to the Admiralty, 1747–57; Auditor of Greenwich Hospital
= ELIZABETH, sister of Sir Thomas Parker (1695–1784) Lord Chief Baron of the Exchequer
William Jervis (1728–1817) Gentleman Usher of the Privy Chamber
JOHN JERVIS (1734–1823) Admiral of the Fleet 1st Earl of St. Vincent = 1783 MARTHA daughter and co-heiress of Sir Thomas Parker
Another daughter
MARY JERVIS = 1757 William Henry Ricketts of Jamaica and Longwood, Hants.
WILLIAM HENRY RICKETTS (Entered R.N., changed name to Jervis on becoming his uncle's heir to the Viscountcy in 1801. Drowned as a post-captain at Brest in 1805)
EDWARD JERVIS RICKETTS (Changed name to Jervis on succeeding to the Viscountcy on Earl of St. Vincent's death in 1823)
Mary

theory of navigation, he must watch and do his duty with punctuality and alertness ; and at least with as much precision as the best midshipman in the ship—for I shall always exact *more* from a very near relative than from those I receive on recommendation. Henry[1] is going to his business again, but he has been rallied about his illness, and the plan to let the ship sail without him, as well as for carrying his new-bought sword, unknown to me (I mean the purchase) to Longwood,[2] as the officers tell him to swagger before the shepherd-boys, and to cut the rabbits' heads off at the holes. He takes it all as I could wish him to do. I beg you will never order him any clothes without my participation, for I shall make him wear his worst jacket through the winter ; he must not, on any account, be more expensive in dress or pocket-money than the others.'

The 'young gentlemen' of the *Foudroyant*, particularly those who happened to be Jervis's relatives, seem to have had a strenuous life under the eagle eye of their captain, who never forgot his own early training.

The preliminary articles of peace with France had been signed at Paris on November 30th, 1782, and leaving his ship at the end of the year, Jervis was elected M.P. for Launceston on January 31st, 1783. On June 5th, in the same year, he was married to Martha Parker, his cousin, an event which calls for little notice in his biographies. At the general election of 1784 he was elected M.P. for North Yarmouth. It was in 1785–6, when sitting in the House of Commons, that he lived for a time in the London house of his great friend, Admiral Barrington, and formed his great attachment for General Sir Charles Grey, with whom he sat on a committee for the fortification of dockyards.

Three years later he was promoted to rear-admiral, and in 1790, when war again became imminent with Spain over the matter of Nootka Sound, hoisted his flag in various ships, the last of which was the *Prince*, of 98 guns. War, however, was happily avoided, and the ships were paid off, when, according to custom, each flag-officer was allowed to recommend one midshipman for promotion to lieutenant.

The midshipmen's berth of the *Prince* was full of the sons of aristocratic and influential families, many of whom had passed the examination. They all hoped for the coveted step to

[1] William Henry Ricketts, Jervis's nephew already in the *Foudroyant*. (See footnote on p. 18.)

[2] Longwood, Mrs. Ricketts' home.

lieutenant ; but, to their surprise, Sir John chose the son of an old officer without influence.

'I name you for the lieutenant I was allowed to promote,' he wrote to the lucky one, 'because you had merited the good opinion of your superiors, and that you were the son of an old officer and worthy man, in no great affluence. A steady perseverance in that conduct which now causes you to be thus distinguished, is the most likely means to carry you forward in your profession ; for I trust that other officers of my rank will observe the maxim I do, to prefer the son of a brother officer, *when deserving*, before any other.'

Ashore again, Jervis was returned as member of Parliament for Wycombe. It was not until October 3rd, 1793, about three months short of his fifty-ninth birthday, after the declaration of war against republican France, that he hoisted his flag in the *Boyne* as vice-admiral commanding a squadron ordered to co-operate with troops in the seizure of the French possessions in the West Indies.

It was now, in no uncertain manner, that he voiced his objection to young married officers by sending the letter quoted at the beginning of this memoir.

4

Martinique, St. Lucia, and Guadeloupe, were all captured by the combined fleet and army by the end of April, 1794. They could not be retained, however, for French reinforcements arrived, and the deadly yellow fever played havoc among soldiers and sailors alike. Jervis himself was smitten by the prevalent illness, and at the end of November, still a sick man, sailed for England in his flagship.[1]

On May 27th, 1794, the Corporation of the City of London

[1] General Sir Charles Grey, Jervis's firm friend, was the military commander-in-chief during this campaign. In the latter part of the war ending in 1783, Grey and Jervis had become intimate correspondents of the Earl of Shelburne—afterwards Prime Minister and Marquess of Lansdowne—Shelburne referring to one of them as 'his Mars,' and the other as 'his Neptune.' Grey and Jervis afterwards served together on the Duke of Richmond's Commission on Dockyard Fortification, 1785–6. Of their co-operation in the West Indian campaign of 1793–4, Sir John Fortescue has written : 'Devotedly attached to each other, they had worked together not only with good will but with enthusiasm, and the result was a perfection of harmony, and even of sympathy, between Army and Navy which is absolutely without parallel in the annals of the two Services . . . the good feeling between fleet and troops survived all the adversity which came at the close of the campaign. . . . Altogether it was a very honourable campaign to the commanders.' (*History of the British Army*, by the Hon. Sir John Fortescue, IV. i. 382.)

voted Jervis its freedom in a gold box ' in testimony of the high esteem of the citizens of London for his gallant conduct and essential services, whereby glorious and important advantages have been obtained by His Majesty's Naval Forces under his command in the West Indies.' The box, of chased gold, bears the City arms on the front, the Jervis arms on the lid, and initials on either side, all in enamel. It is still preserved at Meaford, and it was only recently that it was discovered that the Freedom of the City which it contained was not, as stated by many biographers, awarded for the battle of Cape St. Vincent in 1797, but for services in the West Indies three years before.

The *Boyne* arrived at Plymouth in January, 1795, and on May 4th, at Spithead, was accidentally set on fire and entirely destroyed by the explosion of her magazine. Jervis's flag had not been struck, and practically all his effects and correspondence up to that date were consumed. This accounts for many gaps in the story of his early life afloat.

In the following August, now an admiral, he was appointed commander-in-chief in the Mediterranean in the place of Sir Charles Hotham. He proceeded thither in the frigate *Lively*, and on October 2nd, 1795, hoisted his flag in the same *Victory* that was afterwards Nelson's flagship at Trafalgar, and may now be seen in her last resting place in Portsmouth dockyard.

The Mediterranean Fleet, then the largest naval concentration in the world, comprised twenty-five line-of-battleships, twenty frigates, fourteen smaller frigates or corvettes, and nineteen sloops and smaller craft—in all, seventy-eight ships flying five flags and seventy-three pendants. Among the captains were many who afterwards became famous—Nelson, in the *Agamemnon*; Collingwood in the *Excellent*; Troubridge of the *Culloden*; Hallowell of the *Courageux*; Hood in the *Zealous*, and others.

The discipline, however, had become very lax under the easy régime of Sir Charles Hotham, and St. Vincent soon had reason to find fault. On July 27th, 1796, he writes to the First Lord of the Admiralty to say he has had to replace two lieutenants in the *Gorgon*—' I fear many of the young men of the fleet are in the same state, owing to too much sexual latitude in Leghorn before I took the command.'

Again, on July 29th, ' Vice-Admiral Waldegrave is so very troublesome to me, that I must request of your lordships to remove him to some other service. Besides being exigeant to

a degree I cannot permit, he writes me volumes . . . upon trifles as light as air, when I have so much correspondence of an urgent nature that although I rise at two o'clock in the morning, the day is not sufficiently long to perform it.' Three days later, after a further disagreement with the vice-admiral, St. Vincent again requests his removal from the fleet as 'absolutely necessary for the good of His Majesty's service.'

Until October, 1796, Jervis's main anxiety was the blockade of the French fleet in Toulon, 'a wearisome command,' as he himself called it. Another portion of his fleet kept a watch before Cadiz; Nelson with a small force was detached on various duties, and other ships were convoying merchantmen throughout the length and breadth of the Mediterranean, guarding British interests in neutral ports, or watching French small craft that managed to slip to sea. The number of ships was all too few for the many duties imposed upon them, while their victualling, storing, and refitment was no easy matter.

One of his earliest general orders referred to the necessity for strict economy in spars, canvas, and cordage. Another directed that no seamen were to be sent to a hospital ship unless first certified as really ill by the surgeon of his flagship. Every ship, whether at sea or in harbour, was also to exercise at least five guns every day, the fact being entered in her log. The bedding of the ships' companies was to be shaken and aired at least once a week during the summer, and as often in winter as the weather would permit. Fuel and candles were to be economised; while 'there being reason to apprehend that a number of women have been clandestinely brought from England in several ships,' the captains were ordered to 'admonish these ladies upon the waste of water, and other disorders committed by them, and to make known to all, that on the first proof of water being obtained for washing from the scuttle-butt or otherwise, under false pretences . . . every woman in the fleet who has not been admitted under the authority of the Admiralty or the commander-in-chief, will be shipped to England by the first convoy.'

It was still then the custom for a certain number of the men to be allowed to have their wives with them on board; and as ships of those days had no distilling plant, and could not as a rule replenish their water except in harbour, economy in the use of this commodity was essential if the fleet was to remain at sea for lengthy periods.

In the maintenance of discipline and etiquette Jervis was

always stern. He observed ' a flippancy ' in the behaviour of officers when arriving upon the *Victory's* quarter-deck. ' They do not pull off their hats, and some not even touch them.' Any officer who forgot this ' essential duty of respect and subordination ' was to be publicly admonished, and the flagships' officers were to set the example by removing their hats, not merely touching them ' with an air of negligence.'

In November, 1796, on the outbreak of war with Spain, the commander-in-chief was ordered to abandon the Mediterranean and take his fleet to Gibraltar. He arrived there on December 1st, after a tempestuous voyage and very short of food, the men's rations having been reduced to ' three upon one,'[1] and the biscuit being so full of weevils that it was practically all dust.

Various casualties occurred during the passage, and a few days after reaching Gibraltar one line-of-battleship was driven ashore during a hurricane and became a total loss, while two others were badly damaged. As Rear-Admiral Mann, with seven line-of-battleships and three frigates, had proceeded to England without orders, Jervis's force was thus reduced to ten sail-of-the-line.

Arriving at Gibraltar, the commander-in-chief found his command extended to Cape Finisterre, and was ordered to take his fleet to the Tagus. He arrived in the river some days before Christmas, having the misfortune to lose another line-of-battleship, the *Bombay Castle*, on the way in by the incompetence of a local pilot.

The ships at once set to work to refit and repair, and to replenish with stores, water, and provisions. For these duties Jervis allowed them no longer than a week, and within this time, having written to the Admiralty that ' inactivity in the Tagus will make cowards of us all,' was again at sea. Misfortune still dogged him, for on the way out the *St. George* grounded and suffered such damage that she had to be docked. On February 6th, 1797, however, he was reinforced by six sail-of-the-line under Rear-Admiral Sir William Parker.

The situation was now as alarming as it could be.

France was threatening to invade friendly Portugal, and was ready to despatch an expedition to capture Ireland, where civil war was imminent. Holland was an enemy, and so was Spain. If the Irish expedition came to nought there was serious danger of the French and Spanish fleets combining,

[1] ' Three upon one,' i.e. one man's rations had to serve for three, or one day's allowance for three.

overpowering a weaker British force under Lord Bridport, and obtaining temporary command of the Channel.

England was in a ferment. The people, in terror of invasion, were utterly despondent. Credit had sunk, and the Bank of England had suspended payment. Before even Jervis had left Lisbon there came news that the French fleet from the Mediterranean had arrived at Brest, and that a Spanish armament of twenty-seven sail-of-the-line and fourteen frigates had left Carthagena to join it.

Proceeding to a position off Cape St. Vincent, Jervis waited for the Spanish fleet. On February 13th he heard that it was close. Nelson, then a commodore, shifted his broad pendant into the *Captain*, and the fleet prepared for battle.

That afternoon, at dinner in the commander-in-chief's cabin of the *Victory*, they drank the toast of 'Victory over the Dons in the battle from which they cannot escape.' The same night, as the enemy's signal guns could be heard booming nearer and nearer in the darkness, Jervis sat up, writing and making his will, while making frequent enquiries as to the close order and station of his own fleet.

He was on deck before dawn, walking up and down in silent imperturbability. The morning was foggy ; but the mist clearing, two outlying frigates could be seen signalling the enemy in sight. Other ships were sent to reconnoitre and confirmed the news.

"There are eight sail-of-the-line, Sir John," reported Captain Calder, the captain of the fleet.

"Very well, sir," the admiral replied.

"There are twenty sail-of-the-line . . . twenty-five . . ." said Calder, as the ships were gradually counted.

"There are twenty-seven sail, Sir John!" he reported later, accompanying it by some remark as to the disparity of the British and Spanish fleets.

"Enough, sir!" Jervis testily replied. "No more of that! The die is cast. If there are fifty sail, I will go through them!"

By 10.45 the British fleet were forming their line of battle. Soon afterwards, with the clearing away of the fog, the enemy were plainly in view stretched in two straggling bodies across the horizon.

Sir John Jervis was a few weeks past his sixty-second birthday. Already, though he knew it not, Lord Spencer, the First Lord of the Admiralty, had written him a letter acquainting him that the King intended rewarding him with a barony for his distinguished services in the Mediterranean.

5

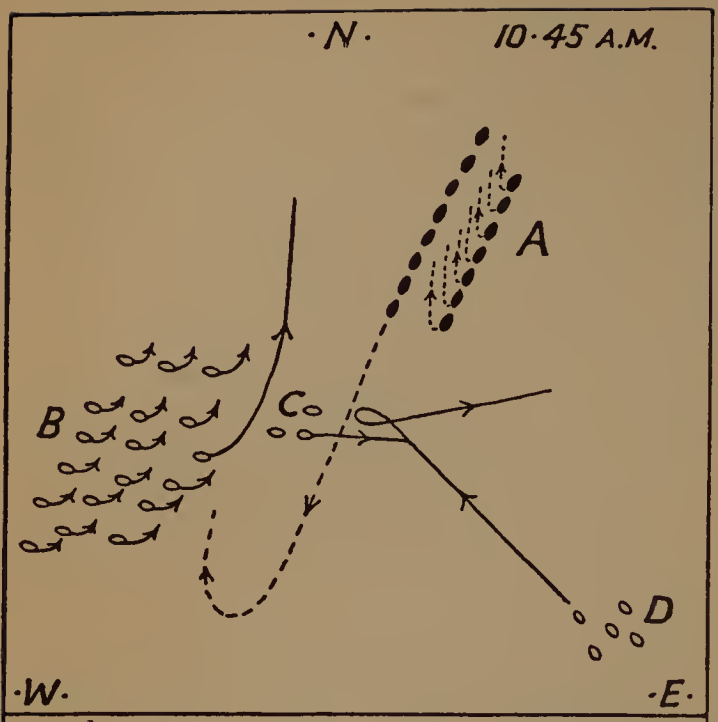
It is not proposed here to describe the battle of Cape St. Vincent in detail.

Jervis's fleet consisted of fifteen sail-of-the-line, and the Spanish, under Don José de Cordova, of twenty-seven. The British fleet included only two ships of 100 guns—the *Victory* and *Britannia*, while there were two 98's, two 90's, eight 74's, and one 64. The Spanish fleet was made up of the great four-decker *Santissima Trinidad*, of 130 guns ; six ships carrying 112 guns, one 84, and nineteen 74's. The superiority in ships and men and guns was therefore on the side of the enemy. It is only fair to state, however, that the Spanish fleet was ill-equipped and badly prepared for action, while their flagship, as an example of the remainder, carried no more than eighty seamen out of a complement of about 1,000. The rest were landsmen or raw recruits. Jervis's ships, thanks to his iron régime and their months of work in all weathers in the Mediterranean, were thoroughly disciplined, in every way prime fighting units.

The Spaniards were still in some confusion, with six of their ships detached from the main body, when the engagement became imminent. Coming down from the north, the British admiral made up his mind to depart from the orthodox procedure by taking his fleet through the gap and engaging the enemy's main body, while the rest, to leeward, were unable to come into action. In this he was obeying one of the first principles of war, that of bringing the whole of his force to bear on a portion of the enemy's. (See Plan I.)

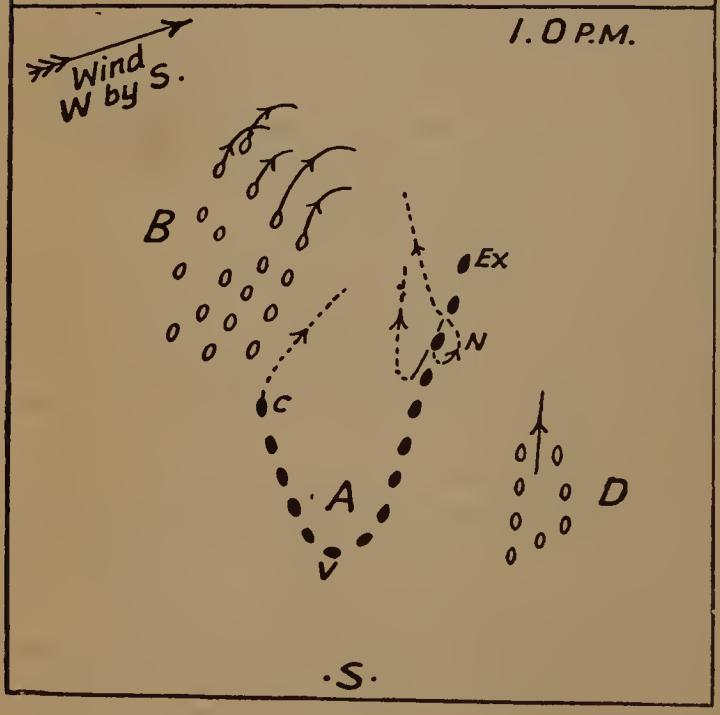
Led by the *Culloden*, commanded by the gallant Troubridge, the British fleet came down under a press of sail. Firing started at about 11.30 a.m. as the *Culloden* came within range, and soon afterwards, passing through the wide gap, Troubridge was pouring double-shotted broadsides into his nearest opponent.

The Spanish rear division was forced to leeward as ship after ship—*Blenheim*, *Prince George*, *Orion*, *Colossus*, *Victory*, *Irresistible*, *Barfleur*, *Egmont*, *Goliath*—passed through the widening space, to tack in succession and come into action with the enemy's main body. Before long the British line was in the shape of a sharp-angled V, the rear vessels still being on the original course. It was now that the Spanish admiral, seeing his ships to leeward were isolated, tried to rejoin them by wearing round the rear of the British line. Nelson, in the



The top plan shows the situation at 10.45 a.m. The British Fleet, A, coming down from the north, is in two compact columns and just forming into single line. The enemy, B, is in no formation, and is altering course to northward. Three enemy vessels, C, manage to get across the bows of the British Fleet and to join up with the detached Spanish force, D, to leeward.

Plan I.



The bottom plan shows the situation at 1.0 p.m. The British Fleet, now in a long single line, is in the middle of its turn, ships in succession, to the northward. The Spanish admiral tries to turn round the British rear to join his detached force at D. Nelson, in the *Captain* (N in plan), wears his ship and steers north to head off the leading Spaniards. Collingwood in the *Excellent*, (Ex), and the vessel ahead of him, soon tack to support Nelson. *Culloden*, Captain Troubridge, leading the British line, presently stands over to help Nelson. The *Victory*, Jervis's flagship, is shown at V.

Plan II.

Captain, third ship from the tail of the line, realised that Jervis's tactics were being frustrated, and, without hesitating, wore his ship, turned out of the line, and flung himself at the huge *Santissima Trinidad*. (See Plan II.)

For some time, until the *Culloden* and other ships came up, Nelson was unsupported and under the heavy fire of the *Santissima Trinidad* and two of her consorts. The *Captain* was soon reduced to little more than a wreck ;[1] but her sudden attack had prevented the Spanish admiral from carrying out his intention. Taking his disabled ship alongside the *San Nicolas*, Nelson then led away his boarders, followed by a party of the 69th regiment who were serving on board as marines. The *San Nicolas* was soon his, whereupon he boarded and captured the *San Josef*, which had fallen alongside in the mêlée. He took her also, and on the quarter-deck of his prize received the swords of the Spanish officers, handing them one by one to William Fearney, of his boat's crew, who tucked them under his arm as unconcernedly as though he were making a faggot of sticks.

By about 4.0 p.m. the Spanish detachment to leeward was beginning to rejoin the main body, and at about the same time Jervis ordered his fleet to lie to and secure the prizes. Within an hour it was dark, and the battle ceased.

Besides the *San Nicolas* and *San Josef*, the *Salvador del Mundo* and *San Isidro* had been captured, in which four ships there had been 261 killed and 342 wounded.[2] The British losses were seventy-three killed and 227 wounded, the *Captain* having the heaviest casualty list with twenty-four killed and fifty-six wounded.

Nelson's unprecedented manœuvre at a critical moment converted what would probably have been an indecisive engagement into a brilliant victory. It was in the evening, after the battle, that Captain Calder, the captain of the fleet, hinted that his action was an unauthorised departure from the prescribed method of attack.

"It certainly was so," Jervis said. "And if ever you commit such a breach of your orders, I will forgive you also."

[1] 'Foretopmast and wheel shot away, not a sail, shroud or rope left.' Nelson's own narrative.

[2] The *Santissima Trinidad*, badly damaged in the hull, her masts shot away or tottering, most of her guns out of action, and with 200 killed and wounded, actually surrendered towards the end of the action ; but in the confusion was not taken possession of. She eventually reached Cadiz under jury rig. (Extract from the *Madrid Gazette*, March 10th, 1797. Reprinted in Vol. I., *The Spencer Papers*. Navy Records Society, 1913.)

The defeated Spanish fleet retired to Cadiz, and, on February 16th, Jervis anchored in Lagos Bay, where he spent a week. On the 28th he reached Lisbon, where the Spanish prisoners were landed and marched through the streets amidst the cheers of the crowd.

Calder arrived in London with the despatches on March 3rd. The news of the Spanish defeat spread like wildfire. Never had a victory been more opportune or popular. Gloominess gave way to joy, for the country had virtually been saved from invasion.

Early in 1797 the government had already decided to confer a barony upon Jervis for his services in the Mediterranean. The King's approval was given prior to February 1st, on which date Lord Spencer, the First Lord of the Admiralty, wrote a letter to the admiral, informing him of the fact. Owing to the miscarriage of despatches, however, the First Lord's letter did not reach Jervis until after the battle of Cape St. Vincent, for which victory, being already a baron, he was created an earl[1] and awarded a pension of £3,000 a year.

It was not until July 15th, in writing to his brother, that he first signed himself 'St. Vincent.' The King had objected to 'Yarmouth,' which town Jervis had represented in Parliament. 'Wishing to avoid a charge of arrogance in naming the scene of action for the title,' he writes, 'I submitted Orford to the consideration of His Majesty, at the same time expressing a wish that he would be graciously pleased to choose for me, and he accordingly fixed on St. Vincent.' 'But Baron Jervis of Meaford is the foundation stone of all,' he adds, 'and I cannot describe the happiness I feel in deriving from a beautiful spot where I have passed many delightful hours.'

As he was already a freeman, the City of London voted him a magnificent sword,[2] and less elaborate weapons to the junior flag-officers and Commodore Nelson. Two vice-admirals were created baronets, Nelson a K.B., and Calder, who had taken home the despatches, was knighted according

[1] While Jervis was rewarded with all that a grateful country could give him, it is interesting to observe what happened to his opponents. The Spanish commander-in-chief was deprived of all offices, declared incapable of serving in any rank, and prohibited from appearing at Court or in any maritime town. His second-in-command and four captains were deprived of their rank; while others were deprived of office for a term of years or reprimanded in public.

[2] The sword, a beautiful weapon of the rapier type, is still preserved in a crystal case at Meaford. The hilt is of blue enamel and gold, chased and inlaid with enamels—first, of the City Arms; second, of naval trophies; third, of two representations of the battle of Cape St. Vincent, encircled with diamonds. The Jervis arms are also shown on the hilt, together with the motto 'THUS,' in enamel.

to precedent. The naval gold medals, first instituted for Lord Howe's ' Glorious First of June,' 1794, were also awarded to all flag- and commanding-officers present at the battle, while, as was usual at the time, first lieutenants and certain junior officers were promoted.

Beyond their small share of prize-money, however, the seamen, whose efforts had made the victory possible, and whose blood had been shed in the process, received nothing. It was not until June 1st, 1847, that a Naval General Service Medal, bearing the effigy of Queen Victoria, was authorised for all officers and men who had taken part in the various naval campaigns, battles, single-ship actions and cutting-out expeditions which had taken place between 1793 and 1840.

By the time of its issue most of the veterans who had fought at the battle of Cape St. Vincent, fifty-one years before, had probably gone the way of all flesh.

If the battle was Jervis's principal victory, it was only one of a series for Nelson, for the Nile, Copenhagen, and Trafalgar were yet to come. And it would be interesting to know Nelson's private opinion on the subject of the battle of Cape St. Vincent. Jervis, it is true, had won a victory over a greatly superior, though inefficient, fleet. At the same time, the engagement was broken off at dark to secure the prizes, for, having gained much, the commander-in-chief was unwilling to risk more. Nelson, on the other hand, was no believer in half-measures. He strove always for annihilation.

6

St. Vincent, Nelson once declared, ' took a hatchet to every error, and enjoyed inflicting punishment.' But Nelson, unique in his humanity, and not perhaps realising the reverent devotion he inspired in those under his command, was judging his austere superior from his own particular standard.

St. Vincent neither sought nor desired the popularity which came naturally to his brilliant subordinate. He was ruthless in his zeal for the Service, tireless in checking the least laxity or indiscipline, and in upholding rigid obedience. He had his lighter moments, though his sense of humour was rather warped in that it generally made others look foolish and uncomfortable and was usually exercised upon those powerless to retort.

It is recorded of him that before dawn, one calm morning off the coast of Spain, he sent for Major Flight, commanding the

marines on board his flagship. The major, thinking something serious was afoot, arrived fully armed and accoutred upon the quarter-deck to report himself. The commander-in-chief merely desired him to sniff the delicious scents of Andalusia stealing seaward on the early morning breeze. Having performed this important duty the major was allowed to resume his interrupted sleep. What he thought of his admiral we are not told.

On another occasion the commander-in-chief arrived at the conclusion that some of the lieutenants coming on board for orders were 'running to belly.' To give them more exercise he directed the entry-ports to be blocked, thus making it necessary for visitors to clamber up the steep side of the ship and in over the hammock nettings. Yet again, he took it into his head that the chaplains were idle, so on rather a boisterous day made a signal for all the reverend gentlemen in the fleet to repair on board his flagship. Many of them, after a long pull of six miles in open boats in gusty weather, arrived dripping wet. The admiral received them jokingly, and, when they were all on board, directed them to go below and hold a conclave with 'Bishop Morgan,' as he called his own chaplain.

The story of the lieutenant who dared to parody the Holy Writ at the expense of his commander-in-chief is well known, nevertheless, well worth repeating.

At a time when mutiny was rife in the fleet, St. Vincent, to impress the crews and to exhibit the military bearing and discipline of his faithful marines,[1] issued an order that every morning when the colours were hoisted, the marines were to

[1] In 1800, St. Vincent was the lieutenant-general of marines, and in 1814 became general. Colonelcies and general officers' appointments in the marines were held by naval officers of distinction and merit. They were sinecures ; but brought an increase in pay. The highest post that actual marine officers could hold was that of colonel-commandant, though they could attain the rank of general in the Army general list. St. Vincent always had a high opinion of the Corps, and in 1802, through his efforts, it received the title 'The Royal Marines' to mark the 'Royal approbation of the very meritorious services of the Corps of Marines during the late war.' In the same year, on June 4th, the King's birthday, the Royal Marines first wore their new uniforms with blue facings instead of white. In 1802, St. Vincent tried hard to have 'service afloat as marines' made part of the ordinary duty of every regiment of the line. He failed in this owing to the very natural objections of the military authorities. Until the very end of his life, however, he was anxious to whittle down the Army, and to increase the marines, using the latter for garrison duty in all dockyard ports and oversea colonies. A few days before he died he made his famous remark about the gallant corps in which he took so fatherly an interest. 'In obtaining for them the distinction of Royal, I but inefficiently did my duty. I never knew an appeal to them for honour, courage, or loyalty that they did not realise my highest expectations. If ever the hour of real danger should come to England, they will be found the country's sheet-anchor !'

parade and to present arms while the band played 'God Save the King.' During the ceremony, which the commander-in-chief invariably attended in full dress, everybody on deck was to remove his hat.

One morning he happened to see a petty officer retain his headgear for a moment when the band started the National Anthem. Springing angrily towards him he berated him soundly. The tale of the incident was bandied from ship to ship, and eventually came to the ears of a merry fellow called Pryce Cumby,[1] lieutenant of the *Thalia*, who promptly wrote a parody of the story of Nebuchadnezzar's image contained in Chapter III of the Book of Daniel.

As it had fifteen verses it cannot be quoted in full; but headed 'The First Lesson for the Morning's Service is a part of the third chapter of Discipline,' it started thus:

'1. The Earl of St. Vincent, the Commander-in-Chief, made an Image of blue and gold, whose height was about five feet seven inches, and the breadth thereof was about twenty inches. He set it up every ten o'clock a.m. on the quarter-deck of the *Ville de Paris*,[2] before Cadiz.

'2. Then the Earl of St. Vincent, the Commander-in-Chief, sent to call together the Captain, the Officers, the Parson, the Seamen, and the Marines, to come to the dedication of the Image which the Earl of St. Vincent, the Commander-in-Chief, had set up.

'3. Then the Captain, the Officers, the Parson, the Seamen, and the Marines, were gathered together, unto the dedication of the Image which the Earl of St. Vincent had set up; and they stood before the Image which the Earl of St. Vincent had set up.

'4. Then the Captain cried aloud, To you it is commanded, O Officers, Parson, Seamen, and Marines, that at what time ye hear the sound of the trumpet, the flute, the horn, the clarionet, the drum, the fife, and all kinds of music, ye take off your hats, and worship the blue and golden Image that the Earl of St. Vincent, the Commander-in-Chief, hath set up: and whoso taketh not off his hat and worshippeth, shall be sorely visited with the Commander-in-Chief's displeasure.'

[1] William Pryce Cumby. First lieutenant of *Bellerophon* at Trafalgar. Succeeded to the command on the captain being killed, and was specially promoted to post-captain for that service.

[2] H.M.S. *Ville de Paris*, the flagship.

The skit went on to relate the incident of the petty officer who failed to remove his headgear and terminated :

'13. And he commanded the most mighty men that were in his ship to seize up and bind the Captain of the Main-top, and that he should be punished with one dozen lashes.

'14. Then the Captain of the Main-top, in his trousers, his hosen, and his shoes, but without his jacket and his shirt, was bound up to the gratings, and was flogged with one dozen lashes.

'15. Then was the Captain of the Main-top sore at the displeasure of the Earl of St. Vincent, the Commander-in-Chief.

'Here endeth the First Lesson.'

This effusion found its way to most of the wardrooms of the fleet and caused considerable merriment. Thence it went to the captains, and a copy falling into the hands of St. Vincent's secretary, was placed by him on the companion ladder, where the commander-in-chief could not fail to notice it. The old man read it with amusement, but was determined to have his revenge.

Inviting a large party of captains to dinner, he made a signal during the afternoon for Cumby to repair on board. He delayed him for a long time in conversation about his ship, and then, as it was late in the day, invited him to remain to dinner. The meal passed off without incident until the cloth was removed, when St. Vincent asked his secretary in a loud voice 'what should be done to the man whom the commander-in-chief delighteth to honour?'

The secretary suggested promotion.

"Not so, sir," said St. Vincent. "Set him on high amongst the people : so, Cumby, go you and sit there," pointing to a chair which had been put on a small dais in the cabin.

"And read that, sir," he ordered, putting a paper in his hands. "Read it out—let us all hear it."

"Yes, my Lord," said the lieutenant, seating himself.

A moment later, discovering he was to read his own parody, he became covered in confusion.

"Read it, sir!" St. Vincent ordered. "Read it, I command you!"

The wretched young officer was forced to read his composition to the bitter end, the captains staring at their plates to control their amusement, and St. Vincent sitting up with a face as black as a thunder-cloud. Towards the end, however, he was compelled to burst into a roar of laughter, which was joined in by his guests.

"Lieutenant Cumby," he sternly said at the termination of the recital, "you are unanimously found guilty, and without a court-martial, sir, of parodying the Holy Writ, and that, too, for the purpose of bringing your commander-in-chief into ridicule. Religion, sir, is under the especial protection of the law; and to diminish the respect in which your commander-in-chief is holden, at all times a grave offence, is, at this particular period of mutiny, one of aggravated sinfulness. The sentence, therefore, upon you, and without a trial, I do adjudge—that, for this your offence you have my permission of three months' leave of absence in England, I hope, as well to amuse yourself there, as you have amused me here; and that, on the day in which you report yourself returned, you will do me the honour of dining with me again."

But, in spite of his delight in jokes of this sort at other people's expense, real kindness of heart sometimes showed itself. A soldier at Gibraltar fell into a deep pit and was nearly suffocated before being rescued by a Portuguese employed in the dockyard, who pulled him out at the risk of his own life. To commemorate his gallantry, St. Vincent gave the rescuer a piece of plate valued at twenty-eight pounds. He presented a sword worth 100 guineas to a lieutenant who had signally distinguished himself in a cutting-out expedition, and hearing that one of his own crew had destroyed seventy pounds' worth of banknotes, while bathing, in his clothes, made good the sum out of his own pocket.

One of his captains fell in love with a lady at Gibraltar, a very bad match for him. To prevent a *mésalliance*, St. Vincent interfered. 'As he is a good fellow,' he wrote to the First Lord, 'I have to request of your Lordships to send him to the East or West Indies to consume his flame.'

On another occasion, his admiration was attracted by the zeal and ability with which the officer in command of one of the small brigs had maintained his station off Cadiz for a long time in all weathers without once returning into harbour.[1]

[1] In a letter to his brother William of July 15th, 1797, the same letter in which he signs himself 'St. Vincent' for the first time, the earl describes how every ship attempting to leave Cadiz has been captured, and none have got in. The fleet had been 'riding triumphantly' before the port for 107 days, it had been bombarded twice and two Spanish mortar-boats and a barge, with the commandant of the flotilla, had been captured. There was not a sick man in the fleet, which was being supplied with fish by Spanish fishing-boats, fruit, onions, and other vegetables by the Portuguese, and well-fed oxen by a Jew butcher from Tangier. Water came from Gibraltar and Lisbon, and 'the People drink a Pint of as good Port each, every day, as will be found on the table of any man in England.' (Meaford Letters.)

Another vessel eventually arrived as a relief, and the brig, being surveyed, was reported to be in need of urgent repairs. For these, in the ordinary course of events, she would have returned to England. St. Vincent, however, was aware that her captain was a poor man with nothing but his pay to support a wife and large family of children.

" If I send him to England now," he said, " he'll be paid off, and he has not wherewith to buy a gown for his wife and daughters."

Instead, the brig's captain was asked to dinner in the flagship, where the commander-in-chief made him a complimentary speech, told him his ship would receive a thorough refit at Gibraltar, and then be sent off to the best cruising ground in the hope of capturing some prizes. " Be sure to fill your hold at Gibraltar with all the provisions you possibly can stow," the admiral added. " You will be at liberty to cruise as long as you can make them last ; and, mind, I expect you will stock your own store-rooms, hen-coops, and wine-bin thoroughly."

The brig's captain thanked St. Vincent for his kindness ; but was forced to point out that his poverty prevented him from laying in the necessary private stock for a lengthy cruise if he was to do his duty by his family. Indeed, he saw no alternative but to retire on half-pay.

St. Vincent, who had expected this reply, handed him a package.

" You know I always like to be obeyed without a difficulty," he said. " Your orders, which are in this packet, will, I hope, be found not to prejudice your family. Let me never hear a word in reply, or of any more thanks about them. There, go and prosper ! "

The parcel contained £100 as a free gift.

Whatever St. Vincent's harshness and irascibility, he was always quick to recognise merit. Moreover, he invariably had a warm corner in his heart for the worthy sons of old naval officers, who, without influence or prospects, were ekeing out an exiguous livelihood at sea with no endowment beyond their inadequate pay.

7

The British seamen at the close of the eighteenth century were the finest fighting men afloat. They fought under the spur of a great tradition, were animated by a spirit which made for victory in close action alongside an enemy. But there is no

doubt that they were hardly treated by the country, and the blame for the many shortcomings was directly attributable to the apathy of successive Boards of Admiralty.

Press-gangs and prisons sent numbers of bad characters to the lower-decks of men-of-war. Ireland, too, was in a state of rebellion, and many members of a society known as the 'United Irishmen,' whose avowed object was the establishment of an Irish republic, had found their way afloat.

The mutinies, however, or at least their excellent organisation, were generally attributed to the machinations of the 'quota-men.' By Acts passed in 1795, all counties and seaports had to supply a number of men for the fleet in proportion to their population. The local authorities not only offered large bounties to induce men to come forward, but also took the opportunity of getting rid of their undesirables. The ships, therefore, were filled with ne'er-do-weels and wastrels of good education, who were able to teach the discontented seamen a good deal that they did not know. Richard Parker, the leader of the mutiny at the Nore, was a 'quota-man.'

The influx of bad characters necessitated the severest discipline and a system of punishment which, to modern ideas, can only be considered as barbarous and degrading. The captain of a ship could order forty-eight strokes of the cat-o'-nine-tails for any trivial offence he chose, and the power was often abused. For more serious crimes a court-martial could order 200, 300, even 500 lashes, delivered in equal instalments alongside each ship of the fleet. Five hundred lashes was virtual death by slow torture.

Interesting though they are, it is impossible here to go into details of the mutinies which occurred at Portsmouth, the Nore, Plymouth, in the South of Ireland, at the Cape of Good Hope, and in various isolated ships during the years 1797 and 1798. Some were carried out on what we may call a 'constitutional basis,' by a concerted refusal to take ships to sea when ordered ; others, particularly that at the Nore, by the violent seizure of ships and the maltreatment of unpopular officers. The great bulk of the men were loyal. But they had legitimate grievances, and, seething inwardly at their bad treatment, were easily swayed by the perfervid utterances of agitators whose only real object was to involve the country in disaster.

In the Portsmouth mutiny—'the breeze at Spithead,' as the men afterwards called it—the men's delegates were careful to point out in their petitions that they would endure 'double the hardships' they had hitherto experienced before

they would 'suffer the crown of England to be the least imposed upon' by other nations. In other words, if the enemy showed signs of taking advantage of their lapse from obedience, they would still fight.

Going on to outline their complaints, they pointed out, and with reason, that their wages, which had last been fixed in the reign of Charles II,[1] were utterly inadequate to support their wives and families in modern conditions with every commodity at least thirty per cent. more expensive. The system of payment, too, left much to be desired. Wages were not paid in cash at any fixed time ; but only at the end of a commission by means of pay tickets. As commissions were very long, and men were frequently turned over from ship to ship without setting foot ashore, it happened they often had to cash their tickets at a heavy discount to obtain any money at all.

The petition went on to ask that the quality of the provisions should be improved, fresh vegetables issued whenever possible, and short measure, or the cutting down of the full sixteen ounces to the pound, abolished. Further, that the sick and wounded should be properly attended to on board, that wounded men should receive pay until discharged from hospital, and that men might be allowed leave in harbour within certain boundaries.

The various demands, couched in no uncertain language, were all justified. Provisions were of vile quality, and were often short in weight on issue, owing to the peculations of the pursers and contractors. In many cases the sick and wounded were treated more like animals than human beings. Men, maimed or incurable, were cast ashore without pensions, to fend for themselves by begging. Leave in harbour was practically forbidden owing to the enormous desertion.

In the end, the Admiralty were forced to agree to the men's proposals and to advise the King to grant a free pardon to all those who had refused duty. The grievances redressed, the men returned to their allegiance and the fleet proceeded to sea.

The mutiny at the Nore, which began a month later, on May 20th, was far more serious. Most of Admiral Duncan's fleet, cruising in the North Sea against the Dutch, deserted his flag and returned to Sheerness. The mutineers took forcible possession of the ships there and at the Nore, hoisted the red-flag of revolt, and landed their officers. On the whole, they were respectful, though a surgeon and several others, who

[1] The wages were 22*s.* 6*d.* a month for able, and 19*s.* a month for ordinary seamen.

were unpopular, were tarred and feathered, and then rowed round the fleet. Two midshipmen were also ducked, and four loyal seamen on board the *Brilliant* severely flogged for speaking disrespectfully of the delegates.

The rebels presently anchored a line of ships across the Thames for the stoppage of trade, and so threatening was the situation that the government organised measures to subdue the mutiny by force. But by June 9th the mutineers had started to quarrel amongst themselves, and within the next three days all the ships but seven struck the red flag and their crews returned to their duty. On June 14th the rebels decided to submit unconditionally, and Richard Parker, the leader of the revolt and an ex-midshipman, was arrested, tried by court-martial, and hanged at the yard-arm. Other ring-leaders shared the same fate, while more men who had played prominent parts in the mutiny were flogged through the fleet or imprisoned.[1]

At the time of this trouble at home St. Vincent was keeping his watch on the Spaniards at Cadiz. Had mutiny extended to his fleet the blockade would perforce have been lifted and the enemy free to put to sea. That might have meant the junction of the French and Spanish fleets, their temporary command of the sea, and the invasion of England across the narrow silver streak of the Channel.

Invasion !

Who can say that at this critical time ' old Jarvie's ' hangings in the fleet before Cadiz, presently to be described, did not save England ?

8

It was impossible to prevent the contagion of mutiny from spreading to the fleet before Cadiz. Indeed, the French at one time boasted of having agents in every ship and regiment in the British service for the express purpose of fomenting trouble, while members of the rebel society, the ' United Irishmen,' were pledged everywhere to encourage rebellion. Letters urging the men to revolt were constantly being received in the fleet, and it was suggested to the admiral that they might be withheld.

" Certainly not, sir," he replied. " Let every letter be

[1] A general pardon was granted by the King to all mutineers still under imprisonment on the occasion of Admiral Duncan's victory over the Dutch at Camperdown, October 11th, 1797.

immediately delivered ; I dare to say the commander-in-chief will know how to support his own authority."

And the disaffection in the fleet, due to the busyness of the professional agitators, continued long after the original grievances of the seamen, as voiced by their delegates at Spithead, had been redressed by the Admiralty. So late as July, 1798, indeed, we find St. Vincent writing to Nelson in connection with a plot instigated by the 'United Irishmen.' The ships were to be seized, the commander-in-chief, flag-officers, captains, and junior officers hanged or otherwise disposed of, after which the entire fleet was to proceed to rebellious Ireland to assist in its capture by the French.

When the seeds of disaffection and mutiny first spread abroad, however, St. Vincent knew well how to stop their coming to fruition. To discourage actual violence, the disciplined marines were ordered to be berthed apart and separated as much as possible from the seamen. They were to mount regular guards and carry out ceremonial drill, while being excused the ordinary ship's duties. Their officers were also directed to keep a fatherly eye upon them, to visit them at their meals, to use every effort to maintain their *esprit de corps*, and 'to prevent conversation being carried on in Irish.'

Aware, too, that idleness bred mischief, the admiral ordered the nightly bombardment of Cadiz by his inshore squadron. It had little effect upon the enemy, but gave his men something to think about. All ships, moreover, were kept in a state of virtual isolation, boats being ordered to be hoisted by sunset. Communication with any vessels arriving from England was also forbidden, except with the express permission of St. Vincent himself.

Violent insubordination broke out and treasonable conspiracies were discovered again and again, particularly in ships newly come from England. It is impossible to mention a tithe of them, but each outbreak was quelled as it occurred by St. Vincent's firmness.

Trouble started in the brig *Kingfisher*, by the crew refusing duty. Assisted by his officers and marines, Captain Maitland rushed forward, sword in hand. Several of the mutineers were killed or wounded, and the remainder, utterly cowed, returned to duty. Maitland, being tried by court-martial for killing a man, was not only acquitted, but was promoted into a better ship.

On the arrival of Sir Roger Curtis's squadron from England,

application came to the commander-in-chief for courts-martial on mutineers from three vessels. One of them, the *Marlborough*, had been one of the most disaffected vessels at Spithead. More trouble had occurred on board at Berehaven, and during her passage to join the fleet. A court-martial being held on arrival, one of the mutineers was sentenced to death, the commander-in-chief ordering him to be executed the next morning by his own shipmates. This was a departure from the ordinary practice, for boats' crews from all other ships present usually assisted by manning the yard-rope.

Captain Ellison, of the *Marlborough*, on hearing the admiral's decision, came on board and reminded him that his crew had determined their shipmate should not be hanged, and gave it as his opinion that they would never permit the execution to take place on board their own vessel.

St. Vincent, standing on the quarter-deck of the *Ville de Paris* with his hat held in his hand over his head, his invariable custom when addressed on duty by any officer or man, listened in silence to what Ellison had to say.

"What!" he then demanded. "Do you mean to tell me, Captain Ellison, that you cannot *command* His Majesty's ship the *Marlborough*? For if that is the case, sir, I will immediately send on board an officer who can."

The captain then asked that boats' crews from the rest of the fleet might attend on board to haul the man up, for he did not expect the *Marlborough's* would do so.

"Captain Ellison!" St. Vincent answered sternly, "you are an old officer, sir, have served long—suffered severely in the Service, and have lost an arm in action—and I should be very sorry that any advantage should be now taken of your advanced years. That man *shall be* hanged—at eight o'clock to-morrow morning—*and by his own ship's company*—for not a hand from any other ship in the fleet shall touch the rope. You will now return on board, sir; and, lest you should not prove able to command your ship, an officer will be at hand who can."[1]

Returning to his ship, Ellison presently received orders to run in and secure all her guns, and to have the gun-ports lowered by daylight next morning. All the launches from the fleet, armed with carronades and commanded by lieutenants,

[1] It was about ten weeks after this incident that St. Vincent wrote to the First Lord: 'The Captains Aplin and Ellison are drivellers, and there are others in this squadron totally unfit to command ships of war in these times.'

were also ordered to assemble at 7 o'clock under the command of Captain Campbell of the *Blenheim*. This officer was ordered to lie off the *Marlborough* with his boats while the execution was in progress. If any signs of opposition to Captain Ellison's orders became manifest, or any attempt was made to open the gun-ports or to prevent the hanging of the prisoner, the launches were to face the ship, almost touching her, and to fire into her until all signs of mutiny ceased. If necessary, she was to be sunk in the face of the fleet.

Punctually the next morning the flotilla was formed up round the *Marlborough* and the carronades were ostentatiously loaded. At 7.30 all the men in the fleet were turned up to witness punishment. Soon afterwards an armed boat, with the provost-marshal and prisoner, left the *Ville de Paris* for the *Marlborough*.

The crisis had now come. Would the *Marlborough* hang their shipmate, or would they not?

Before long the haltered figure of the mutineer appeared on the cathead and the rope was adjusted round his neck. There came a few awful minutes of silence—then the bells of the fleet struck 8 o'clock. A puff of smoke burst out from the flagship.

With the sound of the report the wretched mutineer was lifted well off—then visibly dropped back again!

The moment was an anxious one. Had the *Marlborough* refused duty in the face of the entire fleet?

But no, the men manning the yard-rope had unintentionally let it slip, and, in an instant, the prisoner was hauled up to the yard-arm with a run, to drop again and remain swinging —dead.

The law was satisfied.

At this, perhaps, the most solemn moment of his life, St. Vincent turned to an officer at his side on the *Ville de Paris's* quarter-deck.

"Discipline, sir, is preserved!" he muttered.

Another ship, the *St. George*, arrived from England with several mutineers in irons. Tried by court-martial on a Saturday and condemned to death, they were ordered by the commander-in-chief to be executed the next morning, Sunday. The usual precautions were taken and the sentence duly carried out, though not without protests on the part of one or two senior officers.

'I hope I shall not be censured by the Bench of Bishops, as I have been by Vice-Admiral Thompson, for profaning the

Sabbath,' St. Vincent wrote to the First Lord of the Admiralty. 'The criminals asked five days to prepare, in which they would have hatched five hundred treasons.

'I gave you a pretty broad hint some time ago that the removal of Vice-Admiral Thompson from the post he holds in this fleet would be very desirable,' he wrote again to the First Lord on the same day. 'I am now to request that it may take place immediately, or that I may be relieved; and I do entreat that no more admirals are sent hither.'

Even Nelson approved of the execution on Sunday. 'I congratulate you on the finish, as it ought, of the *St. George's* business,' he wrote to his commander-in-chief, 'and I (if I may be permitted to say so) very much approve of its being so speedily carried into execution, even although it is *Sunday*.'

'I am sorry you have had to differ with the commander-in-chief,' Nelson also wrote to a senior officer who had objected. 'But if it had been Christmas Day instead of Sunday I would have executed them. . . . *Now* your discipline is safe.'

One might go on for pages to describe the hangings and floggings in the fleet before Cadiz. St. Vincent was ruthless in carrying out his duty; but ruthlessness was precisely what was required if discipline and obedience were to be enforced.

The crew of the *London* had been in a state of violent mutiny at Spithead, and had turned all their officers out of the ship except a lieutenant. Him they retained to hang; but his life was saved when the rope was actually round his neck, because one of the delegates remembered him as 'a brave boy.'

Ordered to join St. Vincent's fleet, the ship left England with her crew still in a state of virtual insubordination. They began to think better of their behaviour, however, when nearing Lisbon, where the fleet lay, even showing a certain amount of respect to their officers.

Arriving in the Tagus, the *London's* captain called upon the commander-in-chief, his boat being ordered to lie off at a distance. The tide drifted her close alongside again, and one of the boat's crew saw the head of one of the *Ville de Paris's* men peeping out of a lower-deck port.

"I say, there," shouted the newcomer. "What have you fellows been doing out here, while we've been fighting for your beef and pork?"

"If you'll take my advice, you'll just say nothing at all about that here," the flagship's sailor replied. "For, by God, if old 'Jarvie' hears ye, he'll have you dingle dangle at the yard-arm at eight o'clock to-morrow morning!"

When the fleet returned to its station off Cadiz,[1] the *London* was placed abreast the *Ville de Paris*. Imagining that this had been done because her crew were still in a state of mutiny, the ship's company of the *Blenheim* petitioned their admiral 'the honour of going alongside her, and teaching these fellows their duty.' They were thanked for their offer, being informed that their suspicions were groundless. In point of fact, the *London's*, by a mere show of firmness, had become as quiet as mice within a week.

'Discipline is preserved!'

Those three words might well be used as Lord St. Vincent's epitaph.

9

Nelson, who had been detached for operations against Teneriffe, and lost his right arm in the abortive attack on Santa Cruz on July 25th–26th, 1797, rejoined the commander-in-chief early next year.

The French, meanwhile, had been collecting a large force at Toulon, and the object of their expedition was so shrouded in mystery that the Admiralty again decided to re-occupy the Mediterranean. After some correspondence, St. Vincent was ordered to remain for the time off Cadiz with the bulk of his fleet, but to detach a suitable force to the 'Middle Sea.' Nelson's name was mentioned as the most suitable commander, his 'acquaintance with that part of the world, as well as his activity and disposition,' seeming 'to qualify him in a peculiar manner for that service.' St. Vincent, it need hardly be said, heartily concurred in Nelson's selection, and on May 2nd, 1798, Sir Horatio was sent to the Mediterranean with a squadron, ostensibly to protect trade, but really to watch the enemy fleet at Toulon and to shadow it wherever it went.

The Cadiz fleet then contained three subordinate admirals, Nelson being the junior, and his selection for this important service over the heads of others occasioned much heart-burning and bitterness. In particular, it brought to a head an acrimonious dispute that for some time had been raging between St. Vincent and Rear-Admiral Sir John Orde.

[1] War in 1798 was conducted on gentlemanly lines. On July 6th of that year, St. Vincent writes to his brother William to say that his 'Noble adversary, Don Joseph de Mazzaredo'—the Spanish admiral—had presented him with 'a most magnificent fowling-piece, highly ornamented and mounted in gold and silver, which could not have cost less than sixty guineas.' Not wishing to be behindhand, he had ordered 'a costly and useful thing to be made by the most helpful artist in London for him, and no expense to be spar'd as it is an instrument in our way. I have desired Sir Jo. Banks to superintend it.' (Meaford Letters.)

No doubt there was fault to be found on both sides ; but Orde's letters written without St. Vincent's knowledge to the naval members of the Board of Admiralty, and his ineffectual protest to the First Lord against Nelson's selection, only served to add fresh fuel to the fire. Exasperated, St. Vincent, in his usual peremptory way, ordered Sir John to proceed to England in the *Blenheim*. This evoked a remonstrance from Orde couched in very strong language.

' Sir,' St. Vincent replied in writing, ' I have to acknowledge the receipt of your letter, dated off Cadiz, 3rd August, expressed in terms of insubordination, that even in these times I did not expect to receive from an officer of your rank.'

Orde left the fleet early in September, and in reporting the affair to the Admiralty, St. Vincent stated that Sir John had ' very much interrupted him in the discharge of his public duty,' by trying to force him ' into a correspondence highly derogatory to the discipline and subordination ' of the Navy.

The Admiralty replied by saying that the reasons given did ' not appear sufficiently to justify the sending of a flag-officer to England, it being at all times in your Lordship's power to put a stop to any correspondence which you think to be improper.' They went on to direct that no further flag-officers were to be sent home without their permission unless there was some very strong reason for the step. They added, further, that Sir John Orde had complained of being treated in ' a manner unsuitable to his rank and situation in the fleet,' and had requested that St. Vincent might be brought before a court-martial. While refusing this request, and assuring the commander-in-chief of their full support in every exercise of his authority, they asked him, in guarded language, to treat his subordinate flag-officers with rather more tact, ' that the regular chain of command and obedience, of superiority and subordination, may be perfectly preserved through all ranks, without which it is impossible that true discipline can exist.'

Replying to the Admiralty, St. Vincent submitted to the rebuke, but stated that his pride of character was much wounded by the insinuation that he had improperly treated Orde, or any other officer under his command. All he had done had been necessary for the preservation of discipline. 'I therefore desire you will state to their Lordships,' he wrote in conclusion, ' the extreme injury my reputation suffers by a sentence passed upon me without being heard in my defence.'

A year later, when St. Vincent was again in England, and had recovered from an illness, Sir John Orde, still smarting

under his treatment, demanded personal satisfaction from his former commander-in-chief by challenging him to a duel. The King was advised to interfere, and in an official communication from the Admiralty, St. Vincent was informed that His Majesty had commanded that Sir John Orde's challenge should not be accepted under pain of his severe displeasure.

'The decay of the vigour and discipline of the Navy has originated with the officers, not with the men,' St. Vincent wrote a few weeks after Orde's return to England. 'And I am sorry to observe that the licence in speech, and constant attempts to lower the authority of superiors, is almost universal. The removal of a certain baronet (Orde) from this squadron has produced a wonderful effect, and all are returning to good sense and manners.'

There is no doubt that the commander-in-chief's relations with all his subordinate flag-officers, except Nelson, were unfortunate. There was much to be said on both sides, though St. Vincent's impatience, harsh austerity, and constant strictures in his fight for efficiency and discipline, must certainly have been irritating to officers of high rank.

In August 1796, he had requested Vice-Admiral Waldegrave's[1] removal, which was not immediately approved of by the Admiralty. A year later, he wished also to be rid of Vice-Admiral Thompson, who had objected to hanging a mutineer on Sunday. He was eventually transferred to another command. Between May 1798, and the middle of 1799, moreover, Rear-Admiral Sir William Parker was protesting against his treatment and applying to be removed from St. Vincent's command.

After the battle of Cape St. Vincent Parker took great exception to Nelson's account of that action, as he considered it belittled his share in it. When he became aware that Nelson, fourteen years his junior in age and three in seniority, was chosen for the detached squadron, he, like Orde, lodged a

[1] Waldegrave, the second son of Earl Waldegrave, was a post-captain before he was eighteen years of age and a rear-admiral at thirty-six. Offered a baronetcy for the battle of Cape St. Vincent, he refused it as being inferior to the rank he already held as the son of an earl. At the end of 1800 he was created an Irish peer, Baron Radstock. His early promotion to the rank of captain was by no means exceptional. In 1780, in the West Indies, Admiral Sir George Brydges Rodney promoted his own son to the ranks of commander and captain on the same day at the age of fifteen! This instance of gross favouritism was confirmed by the Admiralty in view of the admiral's eminent services.

St. Vincent, though he believed that a sprinkling of nobility was very desirable in the Navy, never liked the system whereby the younger sons of noblemen and members of Parliament came to sea, received early promotion through sheer influence, and so prevented the advancement of officers of greater ability but less distinguished birth.

protest with the commander-in-chief. St. Vincent appears to have informed him that he had supported this protest to the Admiralty. Subsequently, however, the commander-in-chief took credit for Nelson's appointment, which, to a hot-tempered man like Parker, made the situation intolerable. He felt he could no longer serve under an officer who apparently said one thing to his face and wrote otherwise behind his back.

The battle of the Nile, fought on August 1st, 1798, shattered for ever Napoleon's dream of eastern conquests, while the French army in Egypt, cut off from its base and the sea, was eventually destroyed or captured. But the victory, 'the greatest naval victory on record,' as Pitt expressed it, placed Nelson on the highest pinnacle of fame as a naval commander and brought him much honour.

Nelson was then in his fortieth year, St. Vincent in his sixty-fourth. And whatever feelings of envy may have existed in the old veteran's mind, if they existed at all, were not apparent in his letters to his lucky subordinate. 'God be praised,' he wrote to Nelson on September 27th, 'and you and your gallant band rewarded by a grateful country, for the greatest achievement the history of the world can produce!'

October 1798 found the commander-in-chief at Gibraltar superintending the preparations for an expedition against Minorca, which island, weakly held by the Spanish, was captured on November 15th without the loss of a single man. The ships damaged at the battle of the Nile were also repaired in the small dockyard at Gibraltar instead of sending them home to England. This work, under St. Vincent's personal supervision, was carried out under great pressure.[1]

The strain of the past wearying years, however, was already beginning to have its effect upon his health, and after another short visit to Cadiz, where Lord Keith had been sent out with a reinforcement, he again returned to Gibraltar, worn out and ill with dropsy.[2]

[1] 'I have great pride in having made good the defects of the worst treated ship in the Battle of the Nile, at this place. The *Bellerophon*, which was more maul'd than any ship I ever saw, will leave this place . . . as good a ship as she ever was . . . great exertions and resources are required upon these occasions, for the officers and men always want to go home, to recount their feats after a glorious Victory; and the officers of the dockyards shrink from works of so much labour; but by being on the Spot, I have got the better of all these obstacles.' (Letter to his brother William from Rosia House, Gibraltar, December 13th, 1798.) (Meaford Letters.)

[2] The government had resisted his requests to be relieved, 'and put it upon a footing so honourable to me, that I am determined to die in Harness. I cannot blame them, for there is not an officer in his Majy. Navy capable of conducting the important operations, I am charg'd with. I arrogate nothing in making this

On May 6th, 1799, when he was lying ill in his bed, a powerful French fleet from Brest—twenty-six sail-of-the-line and some frigates—passed through the Straits of Gibraltar into the Mediterranean. Summoned from before Cadiz, Lord Keith arrived with his fleet four days later and followed on the heel of the French. It is unnecessary to describe his movements, for St. Vincent, now so ill that he could no longer carry on his duty, was forced, early in June, to transfer the command to his successor. After another brief sojourn at Gibraltar he sailed for England, arriving at Spithead on August 18th.

He had been commander-in-chief of the Mediterranean Fleet for four of the most anxious and strenuous years in the naval history of Britain, and at an age when admirals of the present day are upon the retired list.

10

St. Vincent, having partially recovered from his illness, was not allowed to remain idle.[1]

As a counterstroke to the French threats of invasion, the British cabinet had decided to land 70,000 troops on the French coast to destroy the arsenal at Brest and to burn the fleet in the harbour. The project was to be carried out during the spring of 1800, the soldiers being embarked in the ships of the Channel Fleet.

Partly because the relations between Army and Navy were then notoriously bad and he was considered a suitable officer to co-operate with the sister Service,[2] partly because disaffection was still in evidence among the seamen and he was required to bring the Channel Fleet to the same state of discipline that he had enforced in the Mediterranean, St. Vincent was offered the command. He accepted it, and hoisting his flag in the *Namur*, at Portsmouth, joined his old flagship, the *Ville de Paris*, at sea off Ushant, early in May 1800.

From the very first, his appointment was viewed with the utmost disfavour by many of the flag-officers and captains under his command. The toast already referred to—'May

declaration, because I have the authority of his Majy. Servants, and the voice of the Profession, in proof.' (Letter to his brother William, from the *Ville de Paris*, before Cadiz. January 6th, 1798.) (Meaford Letters.)

[1] 'I have been contending against a dropsical complaint all winter, and in a few days after it was known that I was on the recovery, Lord Spencer call'd for my Services in the name of my King and Country and yesterday appointed me to succeed Lord Bridport.' (Letter to his brother William from Grosvenor St., London, April 23rd, 1800.) (Meaford Letters.)

[2] See footnote, p. 20.

the discipline of the Mediterranean never be introduced into the Channel Fleet ! '—had actually been proposed by one of the captains and drunk at the table of Lord Bridport, the former commander-in-chief. And when Admiral Sir Alan Gardner, who had been in command during the interim, came on board the *Ville de Paris* to greet his new chief, he openly announced his dissatisfaction at St. Vincent's arrival because he, Gardner, ' had always served in the Channel Fleet ' and regarded it as his ' birth-right.'

Instead of commander-in-chief, Gardner found himself sunk to the third place, Hyde Parker having been nominated the second-in-command. A painful situation was created and Gardner, bitterly disappointed, made known his sentiments to the First Lord by letter, and to St. Vincent by conduct described as ' outrageous.'

' Either Sir Alan Gardner or I must retire from this squadron, or the King's service will suffer essentially,' St. Vincent informed the Secretary to the Admiralty about a month after joining. ' The uncivil return he makes for every attention I show him beggars all description, and must produce party faction in the worst shape ; for although I acquit him of any such design, the disgust he shows upon all occasions will necessarily bring it forth.'

Gardner eventually left the fleet in August.

With most of his new flag-officers and captains, St. Vincent was an intensely unpopular man. But this did not deter him from acting with his accustomed vigour and firmness. Hardly had he hoisted his flag than he at once re-issued every one of his old orders and regulations. In short, his Mediterranean discipline, in spite of much grumbling and many protests, was rigidly re-inforced.

The projected landing, however, never came to pass. Secrecy and surprise were essential for success. It very soon became evident that the French were fully aware of what was in the wind and were making elaborate preparations to prevent it, and on the advice of General Sir Charles Grey, St. Vincent's great friend and the military commander-in-chief designate of the troops, it was finally abandoned. Instead of a spectacular feat of arms, it therefore became the principal duty of the fleet to blockade the French fleet in Brest, a wearisome, dreary task carried out in all weathers and with far more rigour than ever had been the case before.

Except when driven off its station by abnormally bad storms, the fleet maintained its position off Ushant with an inshore

squadron closely watching the enemy's movements. For 121 days on end, sometimes in gales of wind, sometimes in fair weather, the ships beat to and fro off the enemy's port. On only one of these days, a day of thick fog, did the commander-in-chief fail to communicate by signal with his inshore squadron in Douarnenez Bay.

The fleet consisted of never less than twenty-four sail-of-the-line, sometimes as many as thirty. To maintain their station it was necessary that they should tack or wear every night. As the ships sailed in close company the commander-in-chief had issued stringent orders that the captains were always to be on deck while these operations were carried out, and invariably went on deck himself to see that he was literally obeyed.

One bitter November night, when it was blowing half a gale of wind and pelting with rain, the secretary, knowing St. Vincent was not well and fearing that exposure in such weather might do him harm, hurried into his cabin to dissuade him from going on deck when the fleet was about to tack in succession. St. Vincent's swinging cot was empty, his clothes still lay on the chair ; but of the man himself there was no sign. Thinking some accident had happened, the secretary hunted distractedly round the ship, eventually to find the admiral in nothing but his cocked-hat and flannel dressing-gown, standing at the end of one of the open quarter-galleries leading out of his cabin.

Producing a cloak, the secretary asked the old man to return to his cabin as the exposure might well bring about his death.

" Hush, sir, hush ! " snapped St. Vincent with his usual testiness. " I want to see how the evolution is performed in such a night of weather ; and to know whether Jemmy[1] is on deck."

Presently, above the crash of the seas and piping of the wind, Captain Vashon's shrill voice could be heard giving the usual orders.

" Aye," said the admiral, " that will do," and allowed himself to be conducted back to bed.

The combined French and Spanish fleet in Brest comprised forty-eight sail-of-the-line and twenty frigates all ready for sea ; but never once during the blockade did they seriously attempt to give battle. Three times, however, detachments tried to slip out, only to beat a hasty retreat on being sighted by the watching British.

[1] Captain James Vashon, of the *Neptune*, the ship astern of the *Ville de Paris*.

St. Vincent's fleet was manned by about 23,000 officers and men, and for four months at a stretch no fresh meat or vegetables were served out as rations. As was only to be expected, the dreaded scurvy soon made its appearance, but was checked by the regular issue of lemon-juice as a ration.

Stringent orders were also issued as to the cleanliness of the ships—pigstyes[1] being abolished; the spaces between decks dry-scrubbed with sand and holystones instead of being washed in the ordinary way; and the men's bedding being aired once a week. Proper sick-bays were fitted, and as no hospital ship was present, every ship was directed to retain her invalids instead of sending them home to England whenever an opportunity offered. To give them something useful to do, the convalescents employed their leisure in picking oakum for caulking the seams.

Nothing of the kind had ever been done before. The Medical Board, working on past experience, made arrangements for the accommodation of a vast number of sick in temporary hospitals in the towns and villages round about Torbay, ready for the return of the fleet in the winter. Even barns and private houses were earmarked as sick quarters. The fleet arrived in November with no more than sixteen men sufficiently ill to be sent ashore to hospital!

We have already mentioned St. Vincent's orders that no officer or man should sleep ashore when the ships were away refitting. It caused more dissatisfaction than ever; but that his order was justified is apparent from the fact that in one single ship there had been no less than eighty-three desertions during her stay at a dockyard port.

And while the fleet lay in Torbay he was equally strict. Officers, no matter what their rank, were not permitted to go more than three miles from the landing place. There was a good reason for this, for on one occasion a divisional admiral, who had been at a ball, was left behind when the fleet sailed at short notice and eventually rejoined from a frigate off Ushant. 'You probably are informed that an admiral was

[1] This order seems to have been disobeyed, for in January 1801, St. Vincent received an anonymous letter from someone, who evidently wished to draw his attention to the fact that pigs were still found in certain ships, and that they were fattened upon food really intended for the men.

'My Lord St. Vincent,—I have just heard that Brixam market is very well supplied with pork fed on board the men-of-war, and thinking you would like to know it and like some, send for the ship-fed and to ask for the baronets' and rear-admirals': two as fine, I hear, as was ever seen in a market and cheap.

'A. Traveller.'

The rear-admiral referred to was Sir Henry Trollope.

left behind when we last sailed from Torbay,' the commander-in-chief wrote to the Secretary of the Admiralty. 'Half-a-dozen captains, under the same circumstances, has been a trifle here!'

'I took the command four months ago,' he writes to a friend, 'and when I can lay hold on Ben Hallowell, the Captains Darby and Hood, with a few more of my Mediterranean friends, and have purged it of a few who are fitter for Greenwich Hospital than the service they are now engaged in, I have no doubt of bringing it to as great perfection of discipline as a fleet can be.'

No boats were allowed to be away after sunset, while the captain of one of the line-of-battleships, with a party of marines, was always to be on guard at the watering-place at Brixham to prevent desertion.

At this period, St. Vincent's strictures on officers who did not see eye to eye with him or his methods were numerous and scathing.

'Your letter,' he writes to one captain, '. . . has not contributed in the smallest degree to alter the opinion I had formed of your having determined to avail yourself of the influenza to get the —— again into port. The most serious charge I make against you is, the savage rudeness offered to Mr. Baird[1] on the quarter-deck of the —— yesterday, wholly unbecoming the character of her commander, and particularly reprehensible in the desponding state in which your improper conduct has placed the crew of His Majesty's ship under your command. If you continue to court enquiry in the style of the letter I am replying to, it will come sooner than you are aware of.'

To another captain: 'You are a young man, and rather overhasty in applying for an investigation or trial . . . the mere sound of a court-martial has the same pestilential effects as a suspicion of female chastity.'

'A few sheets of copper off a frigate's bottom is not a sufficient ground for remaining a day in port,' he writes to another commanding officer. 'I submit to your judgment and feelings whether, after the very narrow escape you have had of losing your well-earned reputation, you ought to hazard it a second time by sleeping out of your ship.'

'It is absolutely necessary that Captain —— should be moved from the command of the ——,' he says in another

[1] The doctor of the *Ville de Paris*, who was in virtual charge of the medical arrangements throughout the fleet.

letter. 'He cannot govern his ship's company, is continually making frivolous excuses for non-performance of his duty, and appears at all times in a wretched state of imbecility.'

'You could not have selected a more unfit man to command the *Courageux*, than Tom Bowen,' he writes on another occasion, 'who, besides being very near an idiot, is the most cow-hearted fellow on the whole list, and leaky as a sieve.'

Again: 'Seven-eighths of the captains who compose this fleet (subtracting from the number of those who have served *long* under me in the Mediterranean) are practising every subterfuge to get into harbour for the winter . . .'

At the same time, he sometimes allowed his sense of duty to be overruled by personal considerations. 'I have made Thos. Bayley a Captain, very much against my conscience,' he writes in a letter to his brother William of July 6th, 1798. 'A poorer creature, or a vainer, mine eyes never beheld. The same motives which prompted you to help his unworthy mother have occasioned this departure from my public duty, which I hope I shall be pardon'd for.'[1]

The commander-in-chief knew everything that went on. At one moment confident that 'many consumptive cases might be prevented, and others mitigated by timely application of flannel next the skin in catarrhs, coughs, and common colds,' he instructs the captains to 'inculcate this doctrine' in the minds of their surgeons, who, 'some of them, from caprice and perverse opposition to every wholesome regulation,' neglected this important duty. At another, he drafts a memorandum to the captains, publicly reprimanding a first lieutenant for 'having, in violation of the principles of morality, decency, and good manners, entertained a woman of ill-fame from time to time on board,' and positively forbids any such woman being introduced in future into the wardroom of any ship under his command.

But the stern old man performed various little unobtrusive acts of kindness. One of the best men in his flagship lost six pounds by having the notes concealed in the lining of his waistcoat when it went to the wash. The commander-in-chief caused him to be given new notes out of his own pocket in exchange for the little screw of pulped paper that he produced.

He once came across a fine-looking boy working as a clerk in the office of a ship, and asked who he was. He turned out to be the nephew of an officer whom the admiral had promoted for gallantry, but had afterwards been killed at Acre. The

[1] Meaford Letters.

admiral asked the lad if he was there from his own choice, or whether he would prefer a more active life. The boy replied that he had wished to become a midshipman, but that his people had no influence, and no money to pay for his keep in the midshipman's berth. St. Vincent promptly ordered a sea-chest and full kit from England, rated the youngster a midshipman, and took him on board his flagship.

We read, also, of the dour old commander-in-chief inviting all his admirals and captains, to the number of between forty and fifty, to dine, and inviting them to contribute towards a home which had been established for the orphans of seamen who had fallen in action. He himself headed the subscription list with £1,000,[1] and the total sum collected was very liberal. The ship's company of the *Ville de Paris*, hearing of this, dressed themselves in their best clothes and went aft in a body to the quarter-deck to express their gratitude.

But towards the end of 1800 St. Vincent's health was again failing. In addition to his constitutional ailment, dropsy, he was now racked by a violent cough, which never left him.

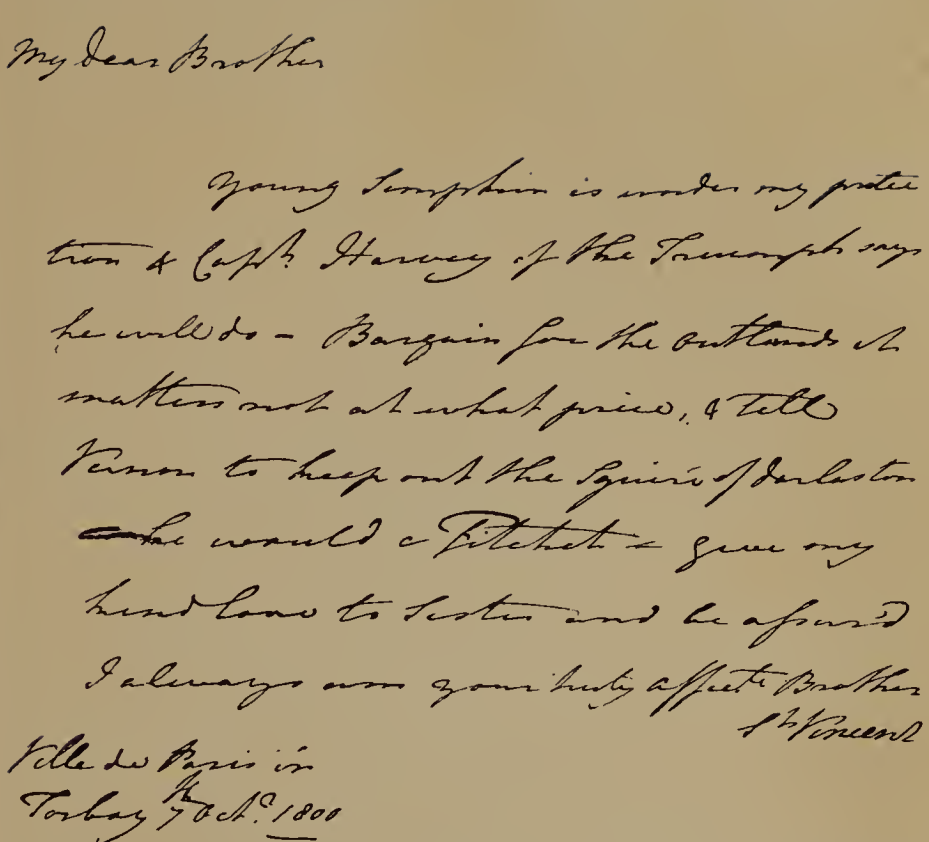
'My carcass is very crazy, the mind as active as ever,' he wrote to Nelson on November 17th, while a month previous he had written to the First Lord repeating his request to live ashore for the next five months. 'No instance will be found in the annals of naval history of a commander-in-chief going through the work I have done in different climes, during the last seven years, the machine thus wrought cannot endure for ever.'

It was true. He had never spared himself, and, sixty-six years of age, had done work which would have seemed strenuous enough to a man twenty years his junior. His brain was as alert as ever; but his body was tired and worn.

[1] The Earl of St. Vincent was a rich man. Writing to his brother William from the *Royal George*, before Brest, on September 3rd, 1800, he says: 'It was not out of ostentation, that I told you I should have £100,000 to lay out in land, at the Peace. The publicity of the funds puts it in the power of any man to know, within twenty or thirty thousand pounds, what I am worth. The amount is, as follows: one hundred thousand pounds in the three per cent. Consols; sixteen thousand in the five per cent.; one thousand pound capital East India stocks (which is worth two thousand pounds), and between twenty and thirty thousand pounds unappropriated; and I get prize-money at the rate of £500 a week.' (Meaford Letters.)

As commander-in-chief, the earl would have been receiving one eighth of the prize-money awarded for the capture of enemy vessels by all ships under his orders. That he was receiving £500 a week, or £26,000 a year, from this source alone will come as a surprise to many readers.

It is more than probable that Sir Alan Gardner's disgust at being relieved—see page 47—was largely brought about by the loss of the substantial sum he hoped to make as commander-in-chief.


My dear Brother

Young Tompkins is under my protection & Capt. Harvey of the Triumph says he will do - Bargain for the outlands & matters not at what price, & tell Fanny to keep out the Squire of Berkeley or he would e Pitchett & give my kind love to Sister and be assured I always am your truly affect. Brother

St Vincent

Hotel de Paris in
Torbay 7 Oct. 1800

Specimen of the Earl of St. Vincent's handwriting in his 66th year, while Commander-in-Chief of the Channel Fleet. Reproduced by the courtesy of Lieutenant-Colonel W. S. W. Parker-Jervis, D.S.O., from one of the letters preserved at Meaford.

Accordingly, while still remaining commander-in-chief, he was permitted by the Admiralty to live ashore in the greater comfort of Tor Abbey, the house of a relative, which overlooked the anchorage.[1] He removed there on October 29th, the actual work at sea being delegated to the next in command. A change, however, was soon to come. Early in 1801 the old veteran was summoned to London.

Before hauling down his flag, a touching little ceremony took place in his old flagship, when the crew presented him with a flag. It was of white silk, bearing the red St. George's cross with his personal arms in the centre. In the upper cantons were the words ' God save the King ' and ' Long live Earl St. Vincent,' and in the lower : ' This flag is presented to Earl St. Vincent, as a humble testimony of gratitude and respect, by the crew of His Majesty's ship the *Ville de Paris*.' This flag was afterwards presented by the Earl to the Fishmongers' Company, of which he was a member. Shown at the Naval Exhibition at Chelsea in 1891, it still remains in the possession of the Company.

II

The change in the political situation, which brought about the resignation of Lord Spencer from the office of First Lord of the Admiralty and the appointment of Lord St. Vincent, need not be entered into here. Actually, on leaving Tor Abbey, St. Vincent imagined his summons to London had principally to do with naval operations in the Baltic, where Britain found herself involved with the ' Armed Neutrality of the North '—Russia, Sweden, and Denmark—over the question of the rights of visit and search of their merchant vessels in time of war. The Czar Paul of Russia, moreover, had entered into a virtual alliance with France, and there was a very real danger of the fleets of all three nations coming under the jurisdiction of Napoleon.

St. Vincent had been nominated First Lord of the Admiralty on February 9th, 1801, and accepted the appointment on his arrival in London soon afterwards. On the 14th, the anniversary of the battle of Cape St. Vincent, he was received

[1] ' This House '—Tor Abbey—' is quite a Jubilee to-day. All the pretty girls (and some of them very beautiful) being assembled, and with the officers of the *Ville de Paris* and my Band of Musick (one of the first in the World) are dancing away most merrily. . . . Lady St. Vincent is much better for her journey, and a trip she made on board the *Ville de Paris* two days ago ' (Letter to his brother William, from Tor Abbey, November 22nd, 1800). (Meaford Letters.)

in audience by the King at Buckingham Palace, then known as Queen's House, and six days later, a few weeks after his sixty-sixth birthday, was sworn into his new office as a Privy Councillor.

His first anxiety was the fitting out and equipment of a fleet for the Baltic to exert pressure on the 'Armed Neutrality.' Fourteen ships-of-the-line, with the necessary frigates and smaller craft, had been detailed for the purpose from the Channel Fleet. After long service at sea before Brest, however, they all stood in urgent need of repair.

The Baltic Fleet must be got away as soon as possible. Haste was everything, and it was at this time, when the hands of the government were tied, that delegates from the shipwrights in all the royal dockyards took the opportunity of coming to London to press their demands upon a reluctant Admiralty. In other words, the work of fitting out of the Baltic Fleet was likely to be jeopardised by a general strike in the dockyards. The cabinet, we are told, 'stood appalled' at the prospect. Mutiny and disaffection, however, were no novelties to St. Vincent, and he dealt with the situation in his own energetic and peremptory way.

Confident that their demands must be granted in this time of national anxiety, the delegates demanded an increase in wages to recoup themselves for the increase in the cost of living due to the failure of the wheat harvests. On investigation, it was found that the average earnings of the men was about ninety-three pounds a year, a sum worth, at least, four times as much as it is now. The offer of a temporary increase in wages, in proportion to the number of mouths in each man's family, was refused. The delegates 'insisted upon' the pay of all the men being permanently doubled.

They little knew St. Vincent. However constitutional a method of obtaining redress a strike may have seemed to the civilian members of the government, to St. Vincent it was nothing more nor less than rank insubordination. Without knowing it, the delegates were trying to overthrow a mountain with their bare hands.

On arriving at the Admiralty to hear the result of their demands, they found themselves bundled out of the building with the information that they were all discharged from government employment. What was more, committees from the Navy Board visited each of the dockyards, and weeded out every man who had been prominent in the strike movement. One hundred and fifty-one men were turned away to

find their livelihood elsewhere. The remainder meekly returned to their work, and on March 12th the Baltic Fleet sailed.

The battle of Copenhagen on April 2nd, the armistice with Denmark seven days later, the assassination of the Czar Paul and the accession of Alexander I, are beyond the scope of the present narrative. Alexander, however, immediately opened friendly relations with England, and the defection of Russia and her allies left France to carry out her plans alone.

Napoleon, it is said, 'was overwhelmed with despair on receipt of the news. All his magnificent dreams were ruthlessly shattered,' while the landing of a British army in Egypt and the expulsion of the French was the final blow to his cherished project of a colony in the east. "There is nothing now left to us but a grand descent upon England," he is stated to have declared.

From the mouth of the Scheldt as far south as the Garonne, every creek and headland was fortified to afford protection to the numerous small craft creeping up the coast to the general rendezvous at Boulogne and Dunkirk. Boulogne was the general port of assembly for the invading army, and it was here that the gunboats and flat-bottomed barges were collected for ferrying the troops across the Channel.

Britain, however, had been making energetic preparations to withstand the invasion now regarded as inevitable. Nelson, with a powerful force of bombs and light vessels in the Downs, had been appointed by the Admiralty to supervise the naval defence arrangements in the Channel. It was a task not altogether to his liking, for on September 22nd, 1801, St. Vincent writes to him: 'I differ from Your Lordship *in toto* as to the importance of the command you fill, and I am of opinion it is not unworthy of an Admiral of the Fleet.'

Volunteers had been enrolled ashore, while at one period it was said to be the intention of the British government to arm with pikes all able-bodied men between the ages of sixteen and sixty living in the coastal districts most liable to attack. Some difficulty was experienced in inducing the 'Sea Fencibles' to fulfil their obligations. This corps, commanded by naval officers, the forerunner of the present Royal Naval and Royal Naval Volunteer Reserves, was principally composed of fishermen and other seafarers exempted from being pressed for service in the fleet, on the condition that they came forward for duty at home in the event of threatened invasion. Though mainly intended for coast defence in the batteries ashore, they could also be employed afloat.

But for the time, the preparations on both sides of the Channel came to nothing. The long drawn out negotiations for peace were coming to an end. The preliminaries were signed early in October, and on the 10th of that month General Lauriston, one of Napoleon's aides-de-camp, arrived in London with the French ratification.

The armistice fever seized both the English and French capitals as it did one hundred and seventeen years later. All London was illuminated, and the Admiralty, besides a range of lights along the curtain wall in Whitehall, had over the main arch the crown and anchor, and flambeaux on the pediment.

Lauriston's carriage was followed by a guard provided by the Household Brigade. The procession, however, was soon surrounded by a mob, who took out the horses and dragged the carriage in triumph through St. James's Park to Downing Street.

Grim old St. Vincent happened to be standing at the garden door of the Admiralty as the French envoys passed. The crowd, recognising him, gave him three hearty cheers, and the admiral, in return, 'recommended them to take care of the strangers and not to overturn the carriage.'[1]

The Treaty of Amiens was signed on March 27th, 1802. After nine years of hostilities, Britain and France were again at peace—a precarious peace, which was to last only for thirteen months.

12

'Nothing short of a radical sweep in the dockyards can cure the enormous evils and corruptions in them,' St. Vincent had written to the First Lord of the Admiralty in January 1801.

Now, a year later, with the establishment of peace and himself as First Lord, he was able to set to work to remedy the state of affairs.

The administration of the dockyards was in the hands of the Navy Board, which was subordinate to the Admiralty, each yard being in charge of its resident commissioner. It soon became evident that abuses would never be checked by a committee of investigation from the Navy Board, and, losing patience with their methods of procrastination, St. Vincent peremptorily ordered all the resident commissioners to place their books and papers under seal, preparatory to visits of inspection by the Board of Admiralty itself.

[1] *The Times*, October 12th, 1801.

The ' visitation ' began early in 1802 and extended throughout all the dockyards, but great as he knew the abuses were, the First Lord had no conception of the wholesale idleness, peculation, and fraud that he and his colleagues were presently to unearth.

From a trial which had taken place in 1801 it was known that the King's storehouses were robbed each year to the extent of £500,000. The loss occasioned through waste, carelessness, and extravagance was very much greater.[1]

It was discovered that for nearly one third of the sum paid out in wages to the men, no work had been performed. Old men, blind and crippled, long past work, received the highest rates of pay. Children of nine and ten years of age were paid the then enormous sum of seventy pounds a year for work in the rope-yards. The supply of timber was woefully and scandalously mismanaged, large sums being paid to private contractors when government stores of timber were rotting. Ships were falling to pieces on their building slips, while others were repaired by contract at more than their prime cost. Supplies of canvas and hemp, often of very inferior quality, were obtained like the timber. Bribes were taken and stores purloined without let or hindrance.

One dockyard official was found to be using a government labourer as his private servant, stealing government coal for his own use, and converting government flannel and canvas into waistcoats and mattresses for himself and his family. Another, who kept a government boat and a crew of four men at Lambeth, had never been near the scene of his duty for four years, except to draw his salary, while, all the time, two deputies were paid to do his work.

We are more concerned with St. Vincent as a seaman and a disciplinarian, than as an administrator and politician. Yet his period of service as First Lord of the Admiralty was such a stormy on, that it is of more than passing interest.

Having discovered a mass of corruption and iniquity, he

[1] ' Our visitation will, I flatter myself, produce the most beneficial effects to the public, if it does not, we have worked hard, and made discovery of numberless abuses to little effect ; I flatter myself, however, that the Public will benefit in a material degree by our labours which are not near their end, for we return to Chatham in the morning and have Deptford and Woolwich to inspect afterwards, and as the abuses increase on our approach to the Metropolis, we have yet much work to perform. The task is unpopular, but it must be religiously perform'd, or the Country will not be able to stagger under the weight of its Naval Defense. . . . You will probably hear us much abus'd for the rigour of our proceedings, but the abuses in all public Departments are arrived at such a pitch, that nothing short of amputation will radically cure them.' (Letter to his brother William, from Sittingbourne, September 22nd, 1802.) (Meaford Letters.)

insisted upon the appointment of a Royal Commission to investigate the civil affairs and supply services of the Navy. After much opposition his wish was at last acceded to in December 1802, and in their many sittings during the ensuing years the commissioners unearthed the unwholesome fact that, in every department of the Service, from the highest to the lowest, there was the same dishonesty and peculation, the same wholesale lack of supervision in the expenditure of public money.

The international situation, meanwhile, was most unsatisfactory. Bonaparte, checked at other points, was still intent upon the invasion of Great Britain, and in March 1803 it became known that active preparations to this end were in progress on the coasts of France and Holland. War could not be long delayed, and the British government called out the militia and ordered the mobilisation of the Navy. Press-gangs were soon at work collecting the necessary seamen for the fleet. It was hoped to obtain 10,000 men in a fortnight, and we read in the contemporary newspapers that every merchant ship at Portsmouth and Spithead was denuded of her crew, and all the local watermen carried off. The same procedure was carried out at other ports, and on May 22nd, 1803, when the rupture with France came, the British fleets were ready.

The rigorous manner in which St. Vincent had made public the many abuses in the Navy, and the censorious reprimands and criticisms he had liberally bestowed upon those whose behaviour had displeased him, brought him a storm of hate and fierce invective. Pitt, who expected soon to be in power, constituted himself the First Lord's political opponent, and, as early as February, it became known that Viscount Melville—Henry Dundas—late Treasurer of the Navy—had been nominated as First Lord in Pitt's shadow cabinet. Twice, in March and again in May, St. Vincent placed his resignation in the hands of Addington, the Prime Minister ; but nothing came of it.

In the House of Commons, meanwhile, the 'New Opposition,' headed by Pitt, opened a violent offensive against the government. Misled by St. Vincent's enemies, Pitt's bitter attacks were particularly directed against the First Lord's naval administration, for the ostensible reason that he had suffered the Navy to sink below the requirements of the country in war.

Early in 1804, in trying to pass a vote of censure, Pitt said of

St. Vincent ! ' I did believe that his name, in whatever naval capacity, was a tower of strength ; but I am apt to think that between his Lordship as a commander on the sea, and his Lordship as First Lord of the Admiralty, there is a very wide difference . . . with all my lofty ideas of his character, as a brave and successful naval commander, I shall not shrink from my duty in censuring him, when presiding at the Board of Admiralty, if he deserves it.'

The motion was defeated in the House ; but at the end of April 1804, Addington resigned. Soon afterwards, Pitt was called upon to form a new ministry. St. Vincent left the Admiralty on May 15th, 1804, and Melville took his place.

On January 15th, 1805, it became known that the Commissioners of Naval Enquiry had accused Melville of misadministration while acting as Treasurer of the Navy. On April 10th Pitt announced Melville's resignation, and some days later the selection of Admiral Sir Charles Middleton (Lord Barham) as First Lord.

A motion came on in the House for the criminal prosecution of Melville. Instead, he was impeached, the trial taking place a year later and ending in his acquittal. At the same time, St. Vincent's conduct of affairs was vindicated, and he received a vote of thanks from the House of Commons. ' It appears to this House that the conduct of the Earl of St. Vincent, in his late administration, has called an additional lustre to his exalted character, and is entitled to the approbation of the House.'

13

A few months after leaving the Admiralty, St. Vincent had been offered the command of the Channel Fleet.[1]

He ' spurned at ' the offer unless Pitt unsaid all he had said against him in the House, and, lest his refusal should create an unfavourable impression on the mind of the King, sought an audience at Windsor. This took place on June 23rd, 1805, when St. Vincent, according to a letter written to Cornwallis, the commander-in-chief of the Channel Fleet in February 1806, ' humbly submitted that though my life was at the disposal of His Majesty, and of my country, I was the

[1] ' I stand upon higher ground than I ever did, and am courted by every lady ; the command of the Channel Fleet with the Union Flag and all its concomitants, as Lord Howe held them, is at my option. But Mr. Pitt must unsay all the falsehoods he related . . . before I will have anything to do with him or Lord Melville (Letter to his brother William from Mortimer St., London, January 23rd, 1805). (Meaford Letters.)

guardian of my own honour, and could not trust it in the hands of Mr. Pitt, after the treatment I had received from him.'

Pitt's death on January 23rd, 1806, altered the situation. The offer was renewed, and St. Vincent accepted it.

Accordingly, on March 8th, at the age of seventy-one, he embarked in the *Hibernia* at Spithead, and in the same month relieved Cornwallis in his command off Ushant. Although not an admiral of the fleet,[1] St. Vincent, as an ex-First Lord of the Admiralty, became one, as it were, by brevet. Instead of the usual flag to which his real rank of admiral of the red entitled him, he was directed by the Cabinet to fly the Union flag at the main.

He set about his new task with all his accustomed energy, reintroducing his old orders for the blockade of Brest and the conduct of his large fleet. His letters, as usual, were trenchant and to the point.

[1] Only one admiral of the fleet was allowed upon the Navy List until 1863, though an additional appointment was occasionally made as a special mark of honour. Sir Peter Parker was the admiral of the fleet between 1799 and 1811, when he was succeeded by H.R.H. the Duke of Clarence, who was junior to Lord St. Vincent. The latter, however, was created an additional admiral of the fleet in 1821.

The phraseology of the flag list in St. Vincent's day was picturesque, though obsolete and unpractical. The old organisation of the fleet into red, white, and blue squadrons had originally given to the flag list three 'full' admirals—of the red, of the white, and of the blue squadrons, of whom the admiral of the red squadron, being the senior, was called admiral of the fleet. This same sub-division into red, white and blue also existed in the junior grades of vice- and rear-admiral; and each flag-officer flew his appropriate coloured flag—plain red, white with red cross, or plain blue—at the main, if a 'full' admiral, or at the fore and mizzen, respectively, if a vice- or rear-admiral. The ships in their respective squadrons conformed by wearing the appropriate coloured ensign at the stern, and flying at the main a long narrow pendant of the same colour, with a small St. George's cross at the top end. In the case of commodores, a swallow-tailed burgee of the appropriate squadronal colour at the mizzen replaced the captain's pendant at the main.

This complicated system meant that the ships in one fleet might be wearing three different species of ensign simultaneously. At Trafalgar, however, for the sake of uniformity, Nelson directed all his ships to fly the white ensign, he himself being a vice-admiral of the white.

The increase in the flag list that had accompanied the expansion of the Navy in the eighteenth century, had seen a large addition to the number of 'full' admirals. The theoretical position of the admiral of the fleet as admiral of the red squadron, however, had resulted in the additions being made only to the numbers in the white and blue lists. To round out the flag list, the rank of admiral of the red was instituted on November 9th, 1805, to commemorate the Battle of Trafalgar; and Lord St. Vincent held this rank when, in 1806, he succeeded Cornwallis in command of the Channel Fleet.

The cumbersome sub-divisions into red, white, and blue were all done away with by an Order-in-Council of July 9th, 1864, which also adopted the white ensign for the Royal Navy. At the same time the red ensign was allocated to the mercantile marine, and the blue to departmental vessels. The blue ensign is now also worn by ships of the merchant navy commanded by officers of the Royal Naval Reserve, and carrying a certain percentage of R.N.R. ratings.

'The great influx of nobility into the Navy,' he wrote on May 2nd, 'has contributed largely to making the office of captain a complete sinecure. . . . As the Service now stands, all the powers, even punishments, are delegated to the first lieutenant : the captain does not turn out as formerly ; seldom comes upon deck ; and takes everything upon report. The change since I commanded the fleet, six years ago, is really quite alarming. . . .'

'There is a great lack of seamanship in the Service, and the young people now coming up are for the most part frippery and gimcrack,' he wrote three weeks later. 'I wish we could revive the old school.'

Nelson's triumph at Trafalgar on October 21st, 1805, and the vigilance of the blockade of Brest, shattered Napoleon's dreams of an invasion of England. The French victory at Austerlitz on December 2nd, however, freed troops for operations elsewhere. The French invasion of Portugal, England's ally, thus became a practical proposition, and in August, 1806, St. Vincent was detached with a squadron to Lisbon. He was to consult with the Portuguese government as to the best means of defending the country with the assistance of British troops, or, if resistance were impracticable, to arrange for the conveyance of the Royal family, together with all men-of-war, merchant ships, and warlike stores which might be of use to the enemy, to Brazil. The Portuguese invasion, however, did not come so soon as expected, and in October the commander-in-chief was once more ordered to resume his blockade of Brest.

His health, which had been bad for years, was again failing. He was an old man and was becoming worn out, and when, at the end of October, the close blockade was lifted for the winter, he was granted permission to live ashore at Rame House, near Cawsand Bay, Plymouth. He was still commander-in-chief of the Channel Fleet. His Union flag still occasionally fluttered at the main-masthead of such of his ships as came in to refit ; but never again was it to fly at sea.

It was in October, too, that he was persuaded by the First Lord to relax his strict regulations as to no leave being given to the men of those ships which came into the dockyard for refit. To the old admiral, it must have seemed the beginning of the end.

It was. Fox's death in September 1806 led to numerous changes, and on the Tories coming into power in March 1807, St. Vincent resigned his command.

'To my great joy and satisfaction,' he wrote on April 24th, 1807, 'the order is come, and runs: "Whereas we think fit you should haul down your flag, and come on shore; you are hereby to haul down your flag, and come ashore."'

Almost immediately afterwards the King granted the old admiral a private audience, and asked him whether he thought the Navy was better or worse than when he entered it so many years before.

"Very much worse," St. Vincent replied.

His Majesty asked him why, whereupon the veteran seaman informed him that the Service was so overrun by the younger branches of nobility, that it was impossible to promote more deserving officers of humbler origin.[1] "I hope your Majesty will pardon me for saying," he added, "I would rather promote the son of an old deserving officer than any noble in the land."

Lord St. Vincent's age was seventy-two. He had faithfully served his country for fifty-nine years.

Comparatively few personal glimpses are available of the old seaman during the last years of his life, most of which he spent at Rochetts, his small estate in Essex. Though partially an invalid, his house was generally full of guests, usually old naval friends and their families. He behaved and lived simply,[2] though detesting parsimony, and invariably lived within his income. He hated waste, and one of the rules hung up in the servants' hall is said to have run: 'The servants are welcome to eat and drink as much as they please, but nothing is to be wasted.' Gluttony was one of his pet aversions. A visitor who once asked for three helpings was never again invited to Rochetts.

He gradually became deaf, and his health more precarious, and unable to stay long at a time in London, took his seat in the House of Lords only on important occasions. He did not shine as an orator; was too blunt and outspoken, too much a man of action, for the niceties of political life. His last appearance in the House of Lords seems to have been in about 1812 when Sheridan, in the House of Commons, referred to him as bearing 'his triple laurel, over the enemy, the mutineer and the corrupt.'

[1] In many ships it was the custom for the midshipmen to furl and reef the mizzen topsail. In one vessel, where most of the young gentlemen were of aristocratic birth, they were thus hailed by the captain: 'My lords and gentlemen, and you right honourable lubbers on the mizzen-topsail yard, roll up that sail and come down!'

[2] Considering it 'flippant and pert,' St. Vincent did not like the use of the letters 'R.N.' after their names upon naval officers' calling cards. In writing, he invariably used the term 'of His Majesty's Navy.'

In 1815, when the Prince Regent extended the Order of the Bath to three classes, Knights Grand Cross, Knights Commanders, and Companions instead of the original K.B., or Knight of the Order of the Bath, with its star and sash, St. Vincent was created a G.C.B. He is said to have been greatly annoyed. When he was created a K.B. it was an honourable distinction ; but now he saw names upon the list which he thought disgraced it. And when he received the first letter bearing the new suffix he returned the envelope with an endorsement, 'Why persecutest thou me with G.C.B.? Letters of annoyance and degradation!' For years afterwards, except when in the presence of the King, he invariably wore his old-fashioned star.

In 1816, Lady St. Vincent died after a long illness and was buried in the family mausoleum at Stone, in Staffordshire. The marriage, though childless, is said to have been a happy one, though, with St. Vincent, matrimony was evidently secondary to his profession. He had been a married man for thirty-two and a half years. Of this period, precisely eight years, one month, two weeks and a day had been spent ashore.

A pleasing little incident took place in September 1817, when Captain Edmund Palmer, one of St. Vincent's former officers, and who married his late nephew's daughter soon afterwards, presented the old admiral with the ensign of the last French ship captured during the war. This was the frigate *Étoile*, captured by the *Hebrus*, under Captain Palmer's command, on March 27th, 1814, after a chase of fifteen hours and a hard-fought action in eight fathoms of water, close to Cape de la Hague. The tricolour, which once hung on the wall at Rochetts, is now in the museum of the Royal Naval College at Greenwich.

Infirm and racked by an incessant cough, St. Vincent spent the winter of 1818-19 in the south of France, visiting, among other spots, Marseilles and Toulon, places he already knew well from the sea through his arduous blockade of Toulon in 1796. He returned to England in the spring of 1819, very feeble, deaf, and suffering from loss of memory.

On July 19th, 1821, on the coronation of George IV, the old admiral, now aged eighty-six, was promoted to the rank of admiral of the fleet and presented with a naval baton,[1]

[1] This baton, with many other personal relics, was exhibited at the Naval Exhibition of 1891. It was then in the possession of Octavius Cooper, Esq., the then owner of Rochetts, Lord St. Vincent's estate in Essex. Sold at Christie's in 1910, I am unable to ascertain its present whereabouts.

corresponding to that of a field marshal. St. Vincent's distinguished services were thus tardily recognised, and would probably have been recognised ten years before had not the promotion of the Duke of Clarence absorbed the single appointment then permissible in the supreme rank in the sea service.

Before me is the tattered remnant of a letter written by the old earl in his eighty-eighth year. The handwriting is still vigorous enough. Dated August 9th, from Rochetts, it is addressed to 'My Dear Edward'—Edward Jervis Ricketts, his nephew and heir. It deals first with the botanic gardens in the island of St. Vincent, and then goes on to say: 'I sleep at the Government House, Greenwich Hospital, to-night, pay my (respects ?) to his Majesty at eight o'clock to-morrow morning on board the *Royal George*, go to town immediately afterwards, pass remainder of the day and night at (?) Brook Street, and hope to dine at Rochetts on Tuesday.'[1]

At six o'clock on the morning of the day following, August 10th, 1822, five old seamen might have been seen walking with tottering footsteps up and down the terrace of Greenwich Hospital, overlooking the river. One, hobbling on a stick, and wearing naval full dress, with white knee breeches and stockings, buckled shoes, and blue, gold laced tail-coat with gold epaulettes, decorated with the broad crimson sash and shining star of the Grand Cross of the Bath, and, at the neck, the gold medal for the battle of Cape St. Vincent hung from its white, blue-edged riband, was Admiral of the Fleet the Earl of St. Vincent, Viscount St. Vincent, and Baron Jervis of Meaford; General of the Royal Marines; at one time First Lord of the Admiralty and Commander-in-Chief of the Mediterranean and Channel Fleets; a Privy Councillor in Great Britain; one of the Council of State for the Duchy of Cornwall; at one time a member of Parliament; Knight Grand Cross of the Portuguese Order of the Tower and Sword; a Fellow of the Royal Society, and one of the Elder Brethren of Trinity House.

The other four were old Greenwich Hospital pensioners, simple seamen, two of whom had served on the lower-deck of the *Victory* in the Mediterranean Fleet, two in the *Ville de Paris* in the Channel. They wore no orders and medals, for the simple reason that they had none, though they, too, had fought in their country's service. Hearing that their old admiral was spending the night at the Governor's house,

[1] Meaford Letters.

however, and knowing his habit of early rising, they had left their beds and come separately to the terrace on the off-chance of seeing him. They were not disappointed.

For an hour the five old men walked totteringly up and down, talking animatedly over old times and exchanging stories of their stirring past. It was a pleasure to meet again, no less a pleasure to the admiral of the fleet than to his old shipmates.

And that same morning, at eight o'clock, the aged earl went afloat for the last time to pay his respects to his Sovereign on board the yacht *Royal George*, lying in the river. His Majesty received him graciously. It was the veteran's last farewell to the Service he loved so well, his last sight of a man-of-war.

Little remains to be said, for in March, 1823, worn out by old age, debility, and convulsive fits of coughing, St. Vincent was dying. To the very end he retained his interest in the affairs of the day, insisting on having the newspapers read to him. His life came to a peaceful end soon after 8.30 p.m on March 13th, 1823. His age was eighty-eight.

His remains lie buried with those of his wife in the family mausoleum in the churchyard of St. Michael's Church, Stone, Staffordshire. In the church itself there is a tablet to his memory by Chantrey, one of his earliest works and an excellent likeness. Though the family had been offered the honour of burial by the side of Lord Nelson in St. Paul's Cathedral, it was declined in accordance with the wishes laid down in the last codicil of his will.

'As I have endeavoured to live without ostentation, it is my anxious desire that no display of pomp should appear at, or after, the interment of my body. I therefore direct that one mourning coach only shall accompany the hearse which conveys my corpse, from the place where it may please God I shall depart this life, to Stone in Staffordshire ; and that no escutcheons or banners be exhibited on the hearse, or in the church, and that no achievements are placed on my houses in Town or Country.'

The earldom became extinct on his death, for having no son, he had accepted the title only on the condition that the earldom died with him. In 1801, however, his nephew, W. H. Ricketts, had become his heir, and was to inherit a patent of viscountcy on his uncle's death. A captain in the Royal Navy, he was drowned off Brest in 1805. On the Earl of St. Vincent's death, the viscountcy accordingly passed to W. H. Ricketts'

younger brother, Edward Jervis Ricketts, who changed his surname to Jervis.[1]

It is said that almost to his dying day the old seaman-earl wished for one gift that it was in the power of his Sovereign to grant him—the knighthood of the Most Noble Order of the Garter. If it be true, it was a wish which never came to pass. There is a monument to his memory, a very indifferent one, in St. Paul's Cathedral, and many portraits, at different stages of his career, at St. James's Palace, in the National Portrait Gallery, at the Guildhall in London, at Fishmonger's Hall, at the Royal Marine Barracks at Eastney, and elsewhere. The Earl of St. Vincent was a frequently-painted man.

There are other portraits and personal relics at Meaford which now belongs to the earl's great-great-great-nephew, Lieutenant-Colonel William Swynfen Whitehall Parker-Jervis, D.S.O., to whom I am indebted for a visit to his illustrious ancestor's birthplace, and for much valuable information unobtainable elsewhere.

The relics at Meaford include the gold box and sword of honour, already mentioned as having been presented by the City of London, some presentation silver candelabra and entrée dishes, a pewter inkstand and snuff-boxes, and some bottles of rum and old Madeira. The latter, now inches deep in cobwebs, were made heirlooms many years ago, and an entry made in the cellar-book, ' never to be drunk, to be kept for ever.' On the old wooden tally in the bin in which they lie are the words, ' Being very old and very good—a remnant of a gift of the Portuguese Government to Earl St. Vincent, and by him directed to be preserved as a relic.' The presentation was apparently made in 1797, soon after the battle from which the earl derived his title.

Meaford, which is rather over a mile north of the town of Stone, and is visible from the main road between Stoke-upon-Trent and London, bears little resemblance to the largish country house in which the earl was born. It was rebuilt in 1824 and enlarged in 1877, and is now a mansion. One of our illustrations, however, shows portion of the old house as it is to-day. The earl was born in the room over the porch, and the window on the left is that of a room used by him as a study in later life, during his frequent visits to his elder brother William. The oak-panelled study, lined with books, the roof over the porch, and the nurseries at the back, are retained in much the same condition as they were a century and more

[1] See footnote p. 18.

MEAFORD

A present-day photograph showing the entrance to the old portion of Meaford, near Stone, Staffordshire, the house in which John Jervis was born on January 20th, 1734-5. He was born in the room over the porch. The window on the ground floor to the left is that of the room used by him as a study during his frequent visits in later years to his brother William.

ago. Between the day and the night nurseries is a peculiar trap-hatch, through which the children could be passed from one room to another.

The earl loved Meaford, and frequently visited his brother William, when, with all the good things the country could produce at his disposal, he sometimes stole away to the walled kitchen-garden to devour the gooseberries and raw parsley, of which he was inordinately fond. No smoking was permitted in the house; but on a knoll, about 500 yards away, a small smoking-house was built for the use of William Jervis and his guests. Four sycamores were planted at its corners. When the railway was constructed in 1847, the line was specially diverted to avoid it. No trace of the little house remains; but the sycamores still flourish.

The coat of arms inherited from his forebears by the present holder of the title is supported on one side by a winged horse bearing a fleur-de-lys, symbolical of Captain Jervis's capture of the French 74-gun ship *Pégase* in April, 1782, by the *Foudroyant*, the action for which he received the K.B. The crest shows the upper half of the same beast issuing from a naval crown. The simple motto is 'Thus,' derived at the suggestion of Earl St. Vincent's sister, Mrs. Ricketts, from the slow and monotonous chant 'T-H-U-S' of a helmsman when steering a line-of-battleship over a century ago.[1] The motto, crest, and supporters seem to have been granted on the award of the K.B. in 1782, though the Jervis family was already armigerous.

Years before the Great War, the name *St. Vincent* was borne by an old three-decker in Portsmouth harbour, used as a training ship for young seamen. It was carried on by the battleship *St. Vincent*, completed in 1910, which afterwards fought at Jutland, and the name still appears in the Navy List of to-day as the official designation of the old Royal Marine Barracks at

[1] Burke's *Peerage*, 1880, p. 1076, explains the motto as follows: 'This motto is a graceful and seamanlike allusion, implying perfect rectitude—"Thus" is the word of direction given to the steersman by the quartermaster when the ship is going in a perfect correct course. For instance, if he wish the vessel to proceed to the right he says "Starboard"; if to the left, "Port"; but if the ship be going quite as it ought to do he says, "Keep THUS," or "THUS" simply, corrupted in nautical pronunciation into "THEIS" . . .'

(Mr. Burke's nautical phraseology is at fault. Orders to the helm are invariably given in relation to the movements of an imaginary tiller. The command '*Starboard*' means that the tiller moves to *starboard*, or to the *right*, and that the wheel and ship's head move to the *left*, or to *port*. 'Port,' similarly, means that the tiller moves to *port*, and that the ship's head travels to *starboard*, or to the *right*. —The Author.)

The word 'THUS' is no longer in nautical use. For many years it has been superseded by the term '*Steady–y–y*,' as an indication to the helmsman when the ship is on the desired course.

Forton, Gosport, now used as a training establishment for boys.

It is as a prime seaman and a stern disciplinarian in a time of national crisis that St. Vincent is principally remembered. He served in twenty-nine ships, and his total service actually at sea, as compiled from his official record, amounted to thirty-three years, two months, one week, and four days. He showed no great flair as a tactician, and the battle which won him his title, through a great and most opportune victory, was overshadowed by the shattering triumph of Trafalgar. Trafalgar, however, set a new standard of its own.

As an administrator, St. Vincent's methods with the dilatory, the incompetent, and the politely procrastinating, savoured, perhaps, too much of the commander-in-chief who had quelled a mutiny in the fleet under his command, and was afterwards exasperated by seeing many branches of the naval service riddled with corruption and intrigue. He was no believer in half measures, and was harsh and impatient, sometimes tyrannical, in dealing with those who tried to thwart him and men he did not admire and respect. A wonderful judge of character, however, he loved a bold man who would undertake responsibility ; but detesting timidity and incapacity like the plague, was not averse to hurting the feelings of, and sweeping aside as worthless, anyone who shunned it. So far as he was concerned, loyalty, patriotism, and duty in his subordinates were summed up in the single word ' obedience.'

It must never be forgotten that it was St. Vincent, certain in his own mind that Nelson was the best man, who gave our greatest naval hero his opportunity of distinction. It is not too much to say that without him Nelson's star might neither have risen, nor the battles of the Nile, Copenhagen and Trafalgar have even been fought. Indeed, the entire course of British and of European history might have been changed.

St. Vincent was a very great seaman and a great man, and the words of Lord Ripon, the Chancellor of the Exchequer at the time of his death, were no empty eulogy :

' No man ever commanded a fleet in better style . . . no man ever displayed better judgment in the selection of his officers ; no man knew better how to enforce discipline ; no man ever displayed greater promptitude in action, or made a better use of the means at his disposal.' It ' was not saying too much . . . that the Earl of St. Vincent ranked with the greatest of those illustrious characters to whom the country is indebted for its glory and renown.'

Those words are true to-day.

THOMAS, LORD COCHRANE
(TENTH EARL OF DUNDONALD)
Admiral of the Red
1776–1860

THOMAS, LORD COCHRANE

I

'My health having suffered by long and close confinement, and my oppressors being resolved to deprive me of property or life, I submit to robbery to protect myself from murder, in the hope that I shall live to bring the delinquents to justice.

'(Signed) COCHRANE.

'King's Bench Prison, July 3rd, 1815.'

On June 8th, 1814, Lord Cochrane, thirty-nine years of age, a Knight of the Bath, a captain in the Royal Navy, and a Member of Parliament, with seven other defendants, was brought to trial at the Guildhall before Lord Ellenborough, the Lord Chief Justice. The indictment contained eight separate counts, and 'its general effect in untechnical language was to charge all the defendants with unlawfully conspiring by false rumours and reports to induce the subjects of the King to believe that Napoleon Bonaparte was dead, and that peace would soon be made, and thereby to occasion a great rise in the funds, and to injure such of the King's subjects as should on February 21st, 1814, purchase any shares in the funds.'[1]

The story of the hoax whereby Mr. Cochrane-Johnstone—Lord Cochrane's uncle and eight years his senior in age—Mr. Butt, and Lord Cochrane stood to make profits amounting in all to £10,450 by the purchase and sale of shares on the Stock Exchange will be told in its proper place. The trial, however, concluded on June 9th, and, after a retirement of two-and-a-half hours, the jury brought in a verdict of 'guilty' against all the defendants.

The sentences were deferred, pending an application for a new trial, and on June 20th, Lord Cochrane was granted a hearing at the court of King's Bench. It is unnecessary here to enter into the arguments used and the noble defendant's protestations of innocence; but on June 21st he was sentenced

[1] *The Trial of Lord Cochrane before Lord Ellenborough*, by J. B. Atlay, M.A., Barrister-at-Law, p. 68. Smith Elder, 1897.

to pay a fine of £1,000, to twelve months' imprisonment in the King's Bench, and, during his term of imprisonment, to one hour's confinement in the pillory opposite the Royal Exchange, in the City of London. This sentence upon a well-known and gallant officer, whom many people considered innocent, was generally unpopular. Sir Francis Burdett announced that if Cochrane were pilloried he would stand beside him, and it was certain that disturbances would take place if this part of the punishment were insisted upon. For this reason it was not carried out. Cochrane himself repudiated any remission of the pillory on account of his past service. If guilty, he said, he deserved it ; if innocent, one penalty could not be inflicted with more justice than another.

He accordingly went to prison, where he was accommodated in two rooms, was allowed to order his food from outside, and to receive visitors. A notice of motion tending to expel him from the House of Commons soon followed the sentence, but on July 5th he was permitted to defend himself in the House. Labouring under intense excitement and indignation, his speech was so extremely ill-advised and vituperative towards the judge, jury, and his political opponents, that it did him more harm than good. Some of its more lurid passages were omitted in Hansard's report, and the general sympathy of the members was so alienated that the motion of the expulsion was carried by 140 votes to forty-four. Cochrane, however, was popular in his constituency. Many people were convinced of his innocence, and at a mass meeting, the Westminster electors passed a unanimous resolution that he was perfectly innocent of the Stock Exchange fraud, that he was a fit and proper person to represent their city in Parliament, and that his re-election should be secured without any expense to him. On July 19th he was accordingly re-elected.

The severest blows of all were yet to fall, for on July 25th his name was removed from the Navy List, and on August 10th his banner as a Knight of the Bath was removed from his stall in Henry the Seventh's Chapel, to be kicked with ignominy down the steps. It was not restored until the day of his funeral.

On March 6th, 1815, on the evil advice of some of his friends, he escaped from prison and went to his house in Hampshire, whence he wrote a letter announcing the fact to the Speaker of the House of Commons. On the 20th he appeared in the House in person, only to be arrested after an unseemly struggle and taken back to prison, where he was kept for a time in a strong room without window, fireplace, table, or

bed. To this rigorous treatment there was no alternative, for, contumacious as ever, he refused to give the authorities any undertaking to make no further attempts at escape.

His term of imprisonment expired on June 20th. Refusing to pay the fine, however, he was detained for another fortnight, until, on July 3rd, he was finally persuaded by his friends to tender the £1,000 note bearing the defiant endorsement quoted at the head of this memoir.

Of his services in the navies of Chili, Brazil, and Greece, between 1817 and 1828 ; his return to England in 1829, and his restoration three years later to the Royal Navy with the rank of rear-admiral ; the good service pension awarded to him in 1841 ; the re-bestowal of the G.C.B. in 1847, and his appointment the same year as commander-in-chief on the North America and West Indies station at the advanced age of seventy-two ; his death in 1860 and burial in Westminster Abbey, I shall write in due course.

In 1857 appeared a book called *Naval Services in Chili, Peru, and Brazil* by the Earl of Dundonald (Lord Cochrane), followed, in 1859 and 1860, by the two volumes of the well-known *The Autobiography of a Seaman*, published by Bentley.

In 1869 another *Life of Lord Cochrane, 10th Earl of Dundonald*, was produced by the 11th Earl and Mr. Fox Bourne, while in 1890 there appeared *The Autobiography of a Seaman, and Sequel*, published by the 12th Earl, our Lord Cochrane's grandson. *Dundonald*, by that well-known historian the Hon. Sir J. W. Fortescue, was published by Macmillans in their 'English Men of Action' series, in 1895.

All these books, in a greater or a lesser degree, contained strictures upon Lord Ellenborough who conducted the famous trial in 1814, and in 1897, a stout volume, *The Trial of Lord Cochrane before Lord Ellenborough*, appeared from the pen of Mr. J. B. Atlay, M.A., of Lincoln's Inn. It was written at the instance of Commander the Hon. Edward Downes Law, afterwards Lord Ellenborough, the grandson of the Lord Ellenborough concerned, for the purpose of refuting attacks upon his grandfather's memory.

'Three Generations of Earls of Dundonald have published and republished books containing attacks on my grandfather, Lord Chief Justice Ellenborough,' says Commander Law in his preface. 'Until lately, I was under the impression that the contradictions to be found in their works, and the extravagant nature of the attacks themselves, carried with them their own refutation to all impartial minds. But when I find that an

historian like the Hon. J. W. Fortescue, and a novelist of the stamp of Mr. G. A. Henty, apparently believe in the truthfulness of the statements to be found in these works, and form their opinion of the conduct of my grandfather from their pages, I consider it necessary to deal with these attacks seriously.'

The book, of 520 pages, goes fully into the events leading up to the trial, the trial itself, Cochrane's attempted impeachment of Lord Ellenborough in 1816, his subsequent restoration to rank and honours, and the grant, in 1877, of £5,000 to the then Lord Cochrane 'in respect of the distinguished services of his grandfather,' not, we may say, for the arrears of his half-pay between 1814 and 1832, when his name did not appear in the Navy List. What, from our point of view, is more interesting, however, is that Mr. Atlay's book states that *The Autobiography of a Seaman* was not, as popularly supposed, written by Lord Dundonald, but by an amanuensis in the shape of a Mr. George Butler Earp. This gentleman, in giving evidence in 1862, before the Committee for Privileges of the House of Lords appointed to determine the succession to the Dundonald peerage, thus describes the method in which the work was compiled :

'My general practice . . . was to write it from his' (Lord Dundonald's) 'documents, not from his words, because I frequently found his memory fail of late years. I wrote it from his documents, and, in general, he made very little, if any, alteration ; he was quite content with it.'

In reply to a further question, Mr. Earp added : 'His memory had begun to fail very seriously ; so much so, that I took many things from his lips, but I made it a practice never to insert anything unless I had documents to verify it, and by that means I found many statements not erroneous from principle, but erroneous from recollection.'

At the end of 1914, there appeared yet another book, *The Guilt of Lord Cochrane in 1814*, written by Lord Ellenborough (formerly Commander the Hon. E. D. Law, who was primarily responsible for the preceding work) 'chiefly for the purpose of refuting the attacks made on my grandfather, Lord Chief Justice Ellenborough.' In the European War that was then raging, we cannot imagine that anybody, apart from the members of the two families concerned, cared very much whether Lord Chief Justice Ellenborough had or had not been unjustly attacked for his summing up and sentence upon Lord Cochrane a century before.

This volume goes further than its predecessor, in that, besides dealing with the Stock Exchange fraud and trial, it devotes considerable space to Lord Cochrane's career in the British and foreign navies, and criticises in detail various alleged inaccuracies and misstatements in *Naval Services in Chili, Peru, and Brazil*, and *The Autobiography of a Seaman*. It proves, however, without doubt, that both books were written by Mr. G. B. Earp, who relied for much of his information upon a Mr. Jackson, for many years Lord Cochrane's secretary.

For his literary labours, Mr. Earp, by Lord Dundonald's will, wherein he was described as the Earl's 'friend and literary coadjutor,' was to receive ten per cent. of all the money that Lord Dundonald considered was due to him by the British, Chilian, Peruvian and Brazilian governments. Under this clause in the will, Mr. Earp's representatives accordingly received £500 of the £5,000 granted to the then Lord Cochrane in 1877, in respect of his grandfather's services. It is known, too, that Mr. Earp's representatives received £3,000 for their share in the claim on Brazil.

It is as a fighting seaman, however, a man endowed with the gifts of a great leader of men and that shrewd Scottish caution which is the better half of courage, rather than as a politician or a dabbler in stocks and shares, that one prefers to regard Lord Cochrane. A giant in stature, fiery-tempered and impetuous in speech, fiercely intolerant of those set in authority over him, his resource, daring, and originality afloat marked him as a prime sailor and a fighter. His officers and men loved him for his sympathy, attention, and courage, and Marryat, who served under him as a midshipman in the *Impérieuse*, gives ample testimony in his books to his captain's magnetic personality. Cochrane was selfish, quarrelsome, and unduly fond of money and all that it meant. He made many enemies by the bitterness of his attacks and personal animosities during his never-ceasing campaigns against abuses in the Navy, corruption at the Admiralty, jobbery, favouritism, peculation, and incompetence on all sides. In most of his quarrels he was primarily in the right ; but it was his method of conducting his campaigns that aroused the ire of those with whom he did not see eye to eye. What, indeed, can have been more ill-judged and foolish than his motion in the House of Commons in 1809, to oppose the vote of thanks to Lord Gambier for his services at Aix Roads ? I shall relate the circumstances in their proper place, but by his almost incredible folly, Cochrane, intent on embarrassing the government and,

incidentally, the Admiralty, as a politician, practically ruined his own career as a naval officer.

Expecting and enforcing discipline among those he commanded, he resented discipline as applied to himself. Times without number he was openly insubordinate to his seniors—once, as a young lieutenant, was court-martialled for a silly altercation which should never have gone beyond the ward-room. He was, undoubtedly, an exasperating person to deal with, and his advice to young officers does not savour of that whole-hearted subordination and loyalty without which the Royal Navy could not continue as the finest Service in the world.

'If you have, in the exercise of your profession, acquired a right which is wrongfully withheld,' he caused to be written on page 153 of the *Autobiography*, 'demand it, stick to it with unshaken pertinacity ; none but a corrupt body can possibly think the worse of you for it, even though you may be treated like myself, you are doing your country good service by exposing favouritism, which is only another word for corruption.'

In Cochrane's day it was possible for officers serving afloat on full pay also to be Members of Parliament, often in opposition to the government. It was a system fraught with many abuses which is no longer possible. Had Cochrane never been an M.P. he would have been a happier man, and his career, though still extraordinarily adventurous, would have been very different.

Pages might be written upon the character and contrariness of one of the most remarkable personalities the British Navy has ever sponsored ; but with all his faults Cochrane was a great man, undoubtedly a very great seaman.

2

Thomas, Lord Cochrane, was born at Annsfield, in Lanarkshire, on December 14th, 1775. He was the eldest son of Archibald, ninth earl of Dundonald, who had served in the Navy as a young man, had abandoned the sea service for the Army, and finally retired to his impoverished Scottish estates to devote himself to natural science.

As a scientist, the ninth earl was something of a genius, and was associated in his work with such men as Cavendish, Black, Priestly, and Watt. In his anxiety to convert his discoveries to practical uses to retrieve his fallen fortunes and to buy back the

family estates, however, he tried also to become a man of business. Without the means really to carry them on, he established factories for the preparation of soda from common salt, with the idea of using it as an alkali for the production of soap and glass; for improving alumina as a mordant for silk and calico printers; for preparing British gum as a substitute for the foreign gum used in calico printing, and for the manufacture of sal-ammoniac and white lead by new processes. None of these projects paid their way. His most disastrous venture of all, however, was a new method of extracting tar and other products from pit-coal, for which he went to live at the family estate at Culross Abbey, the better to superintend the work on his own collieries.

By degrees his inventions passed into other hands, some by fair sale and some by piracy, until at last, with seven children to provide for, he found himself a ruined man. Once, at any-rate, fortune lay within his grasp, for during his coal-tar experiments he noticed the inflammability of the vapour given off during distillation, and fitted a gun-barrel to the eduction pipe leading from the condenser. Applying a light to the muzzle the vapour burnt with a vivid white flame. He had, indeed, discovered the gas with which streets and houses were presently to be lighted. Oblivious to its practical possibilities, however, he regarded it merely as a curious natural phenomenon.

Lady Dundonald died in 1784, leaving four sons, her remaining three children having died in infancy. Money affairs were at a very low ebb, and it was only by the generosity of Mrs. Gilchrist, their maternal grandmother, that the four boys, Thomas, Basil,[1] William,[2] and Archibald,[3] could be afforded a tutor.

'Of our once extensive domains I never inherited a foot,' said Cochrane years later. 'My outset in life was that of heir to a peerage, without other expectations than those arising from my own exertions.'

Migrating to London with his eldest son, the earl tried to induce the Admiralty and ship-owners to make use of coal-tar for the preservation of the bottoms of ships. His proposals were not adopted. Thomas, meanwhile, whose penchant for the sea had been severely rebuffed by his parent, was consigned to the tender mercies of an old sergeant, with a view

[1] Afterwards lieutenant-colonel of the 36th Regiment.
[2] Afterwards major in the 15th Light Dragoons.
[3] Afterwards a captain in the Royal Navy.

to his being initiated into the mysteries of the military profession. According to the custom of the period, a commission in the 104th Regiment had already been obtained for him.

Unknown to the earl, however, Captain the Hon. Alexander Cochrane, afterwards Admiral Sir Alexander, Thomas's uncle, realising that one day his nephew might actually attain his wish of joining the Navy, had entered his name on the books of the various vessels he had commanded. The object, common enough in those days, was to give him a few years seniority. Simultaneously, therefore, at the age of twelve or thirteen, the boy was not only an officer in the 104th Regiment, but, nominally, was also borne on the books of H.M. ships *Vesuvius*, *Carolina*, *La Sophie*, and *Hind*.[1]

He was a tall, lanky boy, big for his age, and, under the tuition of the sergeant, was made to cut his thatch of hair and to plaster it back with grease and flour, 'to which was added the torture incident to the cultivation of an incipient queue.' Round his neck he was forced to wear a high leather stock which nearly strangled him, and his attire was completed by a blue, semi-military tunic with red facings, and yellow waistcoat and breeches. These latter were insisted upon by his father. Yellow was the Whig colour, of which the stern parent abjured his son never to be ashamed.

His appearance must have been comical, for, attired in his parti-coloured costume, he was set upon one day by a gang of young hooligans near Charing Cross, who amused themselves by loud and strident criticisms of his dress. Rushing home, Thomas begged his father to save him from the further degradation of floured head, pigtail, and yellow breeches. The only reply was a sound cuffing ; but the incident made the lad more determined than ever to join the Navy.

It was about now that the earl married again, and Thomas, with his younger brother Basil, was sent to an academy in Kensington Square to perfect his military education. They remained there only for six months, when their father, now slightly more affluent, decided to resume his manufacturing pursuits and returned again to Scotland. Here, for four and a half years, the boys ran more or less wild, though Thomas, as he says, 'worked assiduously at the meagre elements of knowledge' within his reach. He was determined more than ever to show his austere parent that his wish to go to sea was no idle fancy.

[1] He was entered as 'captain's servant' on the books of the *Vesuvius* on December 6th, 1780, just before his fifth birthday !

Satisfied at last that his son had made up his mind, the earl finally gave way, and cancelling the Army commission, gave him permission to go to sea as a midshipman in his uncle's frigate. No funds were available at home to provide the necessary outfit ; but the Earl of Hopetoun came to the rescue with £100, and on June 27th, 1793, with his father's gold watch as a keepsake—'the only patrimony I ever inherited'—he joined the *Hind* at Sheerness.

His age was seventeen and a half, unusually old for a newly joined midshipman. He was over six feet in height, long in the arm, and ready with his fists, all of which stood him in good stead in the rough-and-tumble life of the midshipmen's berth. That he was also heir to an earl and the nephew of the captain did not so much matter.

In the *Autobiography* he gives us a little pen-picture of joining his first ship. Jack Larmour, the first-lieutenant, had been promoted from the lower deck. He had no hobbies, no interests, beyond his ship, but was a seaman through and through. On Cochrane's stepping on board with his uncle, the first-lieutenant, dressed in seaman's clothes, with a marlinespike hung round his neck and a lump of grease in his hand, was discovered busy setting up the rigging. His welcome was anything but gracious. Larmour had an instinctive mistrust for the aristocracy, and, after a little constrained civility, curtly ordered Cochrane to get his traps below.

Hardly was this done, and the newly-joined midshipman introduced to his messmates, when the first-lieutenant was heard grumbling at the size of his equipment. 'This is Lord Cochrane's chest? Does Lord Cochrane think he is going to bring a cabin on board? The Service is going to the devil! Get it up on the main-deck.'

The order was obeyed, the key of the chest was sent for, and presently there came the sound of sawing. Cochrane returned to find his clothes tumbled out on the deck, his chest being sawn in two just beyond the keyhole, and the first-lieutenant standing by watching the operation, with a running commentary of remarks uncomplimentary to midshipmen in general, and to Lord Cochrane in particular.

The sea-chest being reduced to the dimensions that Larmour considered desirable, he went on to point out 'the lubberliness of shoregoing people in not making keyholes where they could most easily be got at,' that is, in the middle of a chest, instead of at one end. Cochrane, though his property was ruined, managed to keep his temper, and contented himself

by thanking the first-lieutenant for his kindness in teaching him so valuable a lesson. He spoke with sarcasm, but Larmour, who seems to have been rather dull, was left wondering whether the new midshipman was an impertinent rogue or a mere simpleton.

The first cruise of the *Hind* was to Norway and devoid of much incident, though, during the time at sea, Larmour discovered in Cochrane the makings of a good seaman, while in the rough and dour first-lieutenant the midshipman found a friend whom he never forgot.

On the return of the *Hind* to England, Cochrane's uncle was appointed to a better frigate, the *Thetis*, to which ship the officers and men of the *Hind* were transferred. She was ordered to be fitted for service at Sheerness, and Larmour, instead of asking for leave, amused himself by remaining on board and working as a seaman. Cochrane asked if he could help, and was given the necessary permission, provided he followed Larmour's habit of shedding the uniform of an officer and assuming the garb of a seaman. So, with a knife in his belt and a marlinespike in his hand, he was instructed by the captain of the forecastle in the arts of knotting and splicing, while the first-lieutenant himself took charge of the gammoning and rigging of the bowsprit, which, as the *Thetis* lay in dock, overhung the public roadway.

War with France had again broken out, and, on completion, the frigate was ordered to join a squadron under Admiral Murray which presently sailed for North America. Her service there was uneventful, and on January 14th, 1795, Cochrane was promoted to acting-lieutenant after only eighteen months service afloat. He was undoubtedly a zealous and a capable officer ; but by the iniquitous system of those days was permitted to count the time he had nominally served in his uncle's ships towards the service necessary to qualify him for the rank of lieutenant. That he was also heir to an earldom doubtless had something to do with his rapid advancement. Indeed, however much he might cavil against favouritism and influence as applied to others, it was largely to these that he owed his own promotions.

On April 13th of the same year he was transferred to the *Africa*, with a provisional commission confirming his new rank, and on January 5th, 1796, again joined his uncle's ship, where on May 27th, 1796, he finally passed for lieutenant.

On June 21st, 1797, still in North America, he was appointed to the *Resolution*, flagship of Admiral Vandeput,

and remained in her until, in 1798, he returned to England in the *Thetis*.

The autumn of the same year found him in the *Barfleur*, Lord Keith's flagship of a squadron which spent most of its time in blockading the Spanish fleet in Cadiz. It sometimes became necessary for the squadron to leave its anchorage to obtain water and fresh meat, in the form of live cattle, on the coast of Africa. The first-lieutenant of the *Barfleur*, one Beaver, was something of a martinet 'who carried etiquette in the wardroom and on deck almost to despotism.' Though very particular in other matters, he permitted an honest penny to be turned by a habit which can only be described as revolting.

During the frequent visits of the *Barfleur* to Tetuan, bullocks for the entire squadron were purchased and slaughtered on board the flagship. The raw hides, being valuable, were stowed away in casks in the hold for sale as opportunity occurred, but as the fleshy parts decomposed the stench below soon became so intolerable that the *Barfleur* was nicknamed 'The stinking Scotch ship.'

Cochrane, as junior lieutenant, and, therefore, responsible for much of the dirty work connected with the bullocks, did not hesitate to speak his mind. It followed, as a matter of course, that he incurred the enmity of those interested in the sale of the hides. One day, having been ashore shooting at Tetuan, he became covered in mud and came off in a boat after the other officers. Arriving on board a short time after his leave had expired, he went below to put on clean uniform before reporting himself to the first-lieutenant. He had hardly changed when Lieutenant Beaver came into the wardroom and peremptorily demanded to know why he had not reported himself. Both men seemed to have lost their tempers. Heated language followed, and according to Cochrane's account he said : 'Lieutenant Beaver, we will, if you please, talk of this in another place.' Beaver promptly went on deck and reported to the captain that he had been challenged to a duel !

On being sent for, Cochrane explained that a duel was the last thing that had entered his mind. To smooth things over the captain was anxious that Beaver should accept an apology, but this was declined by Cochrane, on the ground that he was the injured party and had no apology to make. The first-lieutenant thereupon demanded a court-martial upon his subordinate, the verdict of which was that Cochrane was

admonished 'to be more careful in future.' "Now, Lord Cochrane," afterwards said Lord Keith privately, "pray avoid for the future all flippancy towards superior officers."

The warning was kindly meant, but its recipient does not seem to have taken it to heart. Moreover, so keen was Cochrane on upholding his so-called 'rights,' even as a junior lieutenant of twenty-four, that he never seems to have realised that, by refusing to accept his captain's suggestion of an apology, he put himself completely in the wrong. Had he not been the son of an earl the incident and the resulting court-martial might well have ended his career in the Navy.

3

Throughout 1799 Cochrane continued to serve in Lord Keith's flagships, first the *Barfleur* and then the *Queen Charlotte*.

It is unnecessary here to describe in detail how the French Admiral Bruix eluded Lord Bridport's blockade of Brest in the spring of this year, and how, on May 6th, he appeared off Cadiz with thirty-three sail for the purpose of effecting a junction with the twenty-two Spanish vessels inside that harbour. Declining to give battle to the fleet of fifteen sail under Lord Keith, the Frenchman passed on into the Mediterranean and reached Toulon, whence he sailed again to land men, supplies, and stores at Genoa, Spezzia, and Savona.

Keith, following the French, arrived at Gibraltar on May 10th. Two days later, the British fleet, under the command of Lord St. Vincent, who was at Gibraltar, sailed on into the Mediterranean in pursuit of the enemy.

Of how the French narrowly escaped being brought to action on their way to Spezzia we need not speak. St. Vincent, however, parting company, had gone to Minorca with his flagship, leaving Keith to continue the chase with the rest of the fleet. The latter actually sighted the French look-out frigates between Corsica and Toulon, and would have sighted their main fleet also, had he not, according to Cochrane's account, been urgently recalled to Minorca by the commander-in-chief.

Keith was censured at the time for his failure to catch Bruix, and that eminent authority, Admiral Mahan, endorses the censure. Collingwood, however, held St. Vincent and Keith alike to blame, though Cochrane, in his *Autobiography*, lays all the onus on St. Vincent. This is understandable

when it is recollected that the *Autobiography* was written many years later, and that Cochrane, in the meantime, had been at loggerheads with his late commander-in-chief.

St. Vincent finally resigned the command of the Mediterranean Fleet to Keith in June, 1799. In the meanwhile, the Spanish fleet from Cadiz had arrived at Carthagena whither Bruix had gone to join it. Keith proceeded thither with all speed to find the enemy gone, and on June 26th completed with water at Tetuan. Communicating with Gibraltar he obtained no news of the enemy, and, concluding that they had passed through the Straits at night without being sighted, proceeded to Cadiz. This port also was empty, and, proceeding northward along the Spanish and Portuguese coasts, Keith, on August 8th, fell in with a Danish brig off Cape Finisterre. This vessel informed him that she had passed through the combined fleets two days before. The British admiral at once shaped course for Brest in the hope of intercepting and bringing the enemy to action, but on his arrival off that port found the combined fleets safely at their moorings in the roadstead. He accordingly bore up for Torbay, where he joined the Channel Fleet under Sir Alan Gardner.

On arrival, Cochrane was sent by his commander-in-chief with despatches on board Sir Alan's flagship. After presenting his despatches, 'it was imperiously demanded by her captain whether I was aware that my coming on board was an infringement of the quarantine regulations?' Irritated at his superior's manner and reprimand, Cochrane made a 'plain spoken' reply, for which he was nearly put under arrest. 'I was not sorry to get back to the *Queen Charlotte*,' he says, 'even a show of resistance to an excess of authority being in these days fatal to many an officer's prospects.' This is all very well; but one could wish that Cochrane had not always been so ready and so truculent with his answers.

The combined enemy fleets sailed again from Brest and made for the Mediterranean, and on December 6th Keith, following in pursuit, arrived at Gibraltar and thence proceeded to Palermo. Soon afterwards, when passing the Straits of Messina, Cochrane was appointed by the commander-in-chief as prize-master of the *Généreux*, captured shortly before by Lord Nelson's squadron. It was his first independent command, and the short voyage to Port Mahon was not without incident.

His younger brother, Archibald, had gone with him, and the

crew of the prize was hastily made up of sick and invalided men from the various ships of the fleet. Before long a gale of wind sprang up and the *Généreux* found herself in dire peril. The rigging had not been properly set up. The masts swayed from side to side as the vessel rolled, the shrouds alternately tautening like harp-strings and hanging in festoons. It was dangerous to go aloft, and it was only by Cochrane and his brother leading the way up the rigging that the invalid, scratch crew could be induced to furl the mainsail. Luckily the weather moderated, and by dint of hard work the *Généreux* was put in a tolerable state of order before reaching Port Mahon.

Cochrane and his brother probably owed their lives to being sent to the *Généreux*, for on March 17th, 1800, off the island of Cabrera, the *Queen Charlotte* was entirely destroyed by fire through the ignition of some trusses of hay stowed under the half-deck. Upwards of six hundred officers and men lost their lives.

Lord Keith was so well satisfied with his conduct in the *Généreux* that he wrote home to the Admiralty recommending his promotion to the rank of commander,[1] at the same time appointing him to the command of the brig *Speedy*.

Promotion to commander and appointment to an independent command with a chance of making prize-money at the age of twenty-four and three months were no mean rewards for his services. Indeed, with so many senior lieutenants upon the list, it savoured very much of the favouritism which Cochrane himself was so fond of condemning. But Lord Keith also was a Scotsman, and, apart from the seamanlike ability which Cochrane undoubtedly possessed, there is little doubt that his nationality and aristocratic birth also helped towards his rapid advancement.

Even so he does not seem to have been very grateful, and in his *Autobiography* is rather bitter about his appointment to the *Speedy*.

'The vessel originally intended for me by Lord Keith was the *Bonne Citoyenne*, a fine corvette of eighteen guns ; but the brother of his Lordship's secretary, happening at the time to arrive from Gibraltar, where he had been superseded in command of the sheer hulk, that functionary managed to place his brother in one of the finest sloops in the Service, leaving me the least efficient craft on the station.'

[1] His promotion was dated March 28th, 1800.

4

Even according to the standards of 1800, the *Speedy* was a miserably small ship. With a tonnage of 158, she was about the size of an average coasting brig, and was crowded, rather than manned, with a crew of six officers and eighty-four men. Her armament consisted of fourteen 4-pounders, a type of gun 'little larger than a blunderbuss,' and, on one occasion, her captain derisively walked her tiny quarterdeck with her entire broadside of shot in his coat pockets. Being dissatisfied with the armament, he applied for heavier guns, but the ship was too lightly built to stand the extra concussion.

Cochrane's height was six feet two inches, and that of his cabin no more than five feet. The floor space was so restricted that there was no room for a chair, merely a small table surrounded by lockers, which served the double purpose of store cupboard and seats. 'The most singular discomfort,' he observes, 'was that my only practical mode of shaving consisted in removing the skylight and putting my head through to make a toilet-table of the quarter-deck.'

Masts, yards, and rigging were on the same tiny scale as the ship herself. She once carried away her mainyard, and, to replace it, was supplied with the fore-topgallant yard of the *Généreux*, a second-rate. Even so the spar was too large, and an order was given to cut off the yard-arms. Cochrane circumvented it by planing the yard-arms as though they had been cut, and thus, with some slight alteration in the rigging, obtaining a greater spread of canvas.

In spite of what he refers to as the 'unformidable character' of his little command, the *Speedy* soon began to make prizes, capturing her first—a French privateer of six guns and forty-eight men—on May 10th, while on passage with a convoy from Cagliari to Leghorn. After being retained with Lord Keith's squadron at Genoa until the termination of Massena's gallant defence of that city against the Austrians on June 4th, Cochrane, ten days later, was detached on an independent cruise.

By June 23rd the *Speedy* was back at Leghorn with two prizes. Sailing again on the 25th, she took the following day, at Bastia, a Spanish letter of marque of 10 guns and thirty-three men bound from Tunis to Barcelona. She took her capture in tow, and, though chased by five gunboats, with whom she kept up a running fight until after midnight, succeeded in making her escape with her prize. Other small vessels were

taken on July 9th, 19th, and 31st, and on August 3rd she anchored with her prizes at Leghorn, where Cochrane was very kindly received by the commander-in-chief, Lord Keith.

It would be tedious and wearisome to describe his various captures between August and the middle of December, but, cruising off the Spanish coast and the Balearic Islands, the life was full of excitement. On one occasion the little ship narrowly escaped being swamped by heavy seas breaking on board during a gale of wind. On others, she drove a French bombard on the rocks, and amused herself by opening fire upon and dispersing enemy troops ashore.

The Spaniards, meanwhile, had detailed various vessels to hunt down the *Speedy*, which by this time had made herself notorious. 'Not that there was much danger of being caught,' says Cochrane. The enemy merely busied themselves off the coast in daytime when he was away out at sea, it being his habit to keep out of sight during the day, and to run in at dawn.

On December 21st he nearly caught a Tartar. Seeing a large, heavily-laden ship inshore, the *Speedy* gave chase. On approaching, however, the stranger suddenly opened her gun-ports, to display herself as a powerful Spanish frigate crowded with men. To engage her was out of the question. It was equally impossible to escape, for the Spaniard could have outsailed the *Speedy* and have run her down by mere weight. Cochrane, however, who had not been unmindful of such a contingency, was ready with a ruse.

Aware of the enemy's efforts to capture him, he had caused his ship to be painted in imitation of a Danish brig which was well known off the coast, and had even shipped a Danish quartermaster, with a suitable uniform. So, hoisting the colours of Denmark, he spoke the frigate. The latter, not satisfied, sent a boat across to investigate. The quartermaster, in the uniform of a Danish officer, now came into action ; and at the same time the *Speedy* ran up the yellow quarantine flag.

Cochrane was calculating on the Spanish horror of the plague, which then ravaged the Barbary coast, and, on the boat coming within hail, the pseudo-Danish officer informed her that his ship was two days out from Algiers, where the plague was violent. It was enough. The boat put about and returned to the frigate, which, after wishing the *Speedy bon voyage*, filled and made sail. Cochrane, with a degree of thankfulness that we may imagine, did likewise.

Between December 24th, 1800, and February 1st, 1801, when the *Speedy* arrived at Malta for a refit, she engaged various other vessels and succeeded in capturing four.

Whilst at Malta, Cochrane became embroiled in an incident which might well have ended his career. Britain, at the time, was at war with republican France, but was on friendly terms with the royalists. It happened that a French royalist regiment, stationed in Malta, organised a fancy-dress ball, for which he bought a ticket. Disguising himself as a seaman, even to the marlinespike and the lump of grease in his hat, a costume as honourable, in his estimation, as were the Greek, Turkish, or other Oriental dresses in vogue at such entertainments, he presented himself at the ball-room, only to be refused entry because of his attire. Expostulating that the choice of fancy dresses had been left to the wearers, and that his costume was quite as picturesque, and infinitely more lifelike, than that of an Arcadian shepherd, he demanded admittance. An angry argument ensued, the upshot of which was that a French officer seized him by the collar and tried to eject him. Cochrane's retort was 'a substantial mark of British indignation, and at the same time an uncomplimentary remark in his own language.' In a moment the ball-room was in an uproar, and a French picket being called, Cochrane, after a struggle, was carried off to the guard-house.

He was freed on announcing his name, but the French officer concerned demanded an apology. This was refused, with the consequence that Cochrane was challenged to a duel. The pair met the next morning behind the ramparts, the Frenchman being hit in the thigh, and his bullet perforating Cochrane's coat, waistcoat, and shirt, and finally bruising his side. Quarrelsome though he may have been, such a serious ending to a trumpery disagreement was little to Cochrane's taste. 'It was a lesson to me in future,' he says, 'never to do anything in frolic which might give even unintentional offence.'

Returning to her old cruising ground off the Spanish coast the *Speedy* continued her depredations with great success. One evening in March, 1801, she was chased by a large Spanish frigate, and in her efforts to escape under a press of sail, sprung her main-topgallant-yard and lost ground while fishing it. At dawn the next morning the Spaniard was still in sight. She managed to gain considerably during the day, and as it came on to blow the little *Speedy* was forced to take in her royals. Cochrane, however, succeeded in eluding his pursuer during

darkness by the time-honoured ruse of dropping a tub with a light in it, and then altering course.

Four more prizes were captured during the month of April. On May 5th, off Barcelona, a swarm of Spanish gunboats came out of the harbour and made towards the *Speedy*. The latter at once pursued, whereupon the gunboats turned tail and fled. Suspecting a ruse to decoy him into the reach of some larger ship, Cochrane refused to chase them close inshore, but on the *Speedy* altering course to seaward the gunboats again came out and a desultory action ensued.

The next morning at daylight the sloop again ran in towards the coast, and very soon sighted a large Spanish frigate under sail close in under the land. The *Speedy*'s officers had been rather dissatisfied because Cochrane had not attacked the frigate met with on December 21st, and he now told them they should have the fight they wished for, in spite of the facts that the enemy was by far the larger and more powerfully-armed ship, and that the *Speedy* herself was short-handed through men being away in prizes.

Preparing for action, the sloop steered towards her adversary, who, at 9.30 a.m., fired a gun and hoisted Spanish colours. Partly to gain time, partly to mislead, the *Speedy* broke the American ensign, until, swinging round on the other tack, she showed her British colours. The frigate replied with two ineffectual broadsides, but Cochrane, realising it was mere waste of ammunition to fire his miserable 4-pounders at long range, held his fire, ran in under his enemy's lee, and locked his yards in her rigging. Then, and not before, he gave orders to open fire. The 4-pounders, which had been doubly or trebly shotted by their crews on their own initiative, were discharged at full elevation with telling effect, their very first broadside killing the Spanish captain and the boatswain.

The *Speedy*, now close alongside her opponent, lay so low in the water that the frigate's guns could not sufficiently be depressed to hit her. The Spaniards thereupon tried to carry her by boarding, but, hearing the orders given, Cochrane frustrated them at the last moment by sheering his ship off, and then pouring in a volley of musketry, followed by a broadside.

In this manner the Spanish boarding parties, which must have outnumbered the British by more than four to one, were twice prevented from leaping on to the sloop's deck. Realising they were losing men for nothing, the enemy returned to their guns, which were soon cutting up the *Speedy's* rigging from stem to stern and riddling her sails. For nearly an hour the

fight went on, though the *Speedy* lost only two men killed and four wounded. Seeing that his ship was crippled aloft, however, Cochrane told his men they must either capture the frigate or be captured themselves, in which case the enemy would give no quarter. A few minutes energetically employed, he informed them, would finish the fight in their favour.

Before making up his mind to board, however, he had devised a characteristic trick Knowing that the final struggle would be a desperate business, and aware that the Spaniards were full of superstition, he had caused a part of his little crew to blacken their faces. The *Speedy's* doctor, Guthrie, volunteered to take the helm. He placed the ship close alongside, and, in a few moments, led by the captain himself, all the crew were on the enemy's deck.

For a moment the Spaniards were taken by surprise, but then made a rush to the waist to repel boarders. For some minutes the fight continued, first one side getting the upper hand, and then the other. The party with black faces, meanwhile, had boarded the frigate over the bows, and, turning to face their attack, the Spaniards stood for a few moments as though ' transfixed to the deck by the apparition of so many diabolical-looking figures emerging from the white smoke of the bow guns.' Seizing their opportunity, the other party rushed in on them from behind, and gained some advantage. At much the same time, seeing that the Spanish colours were still flying, Cochrane ordered one of his men aft to haul them down. Thinking this had been done by the order of one of their own officers, the enemy immediately threw down their arms and surrendered.

In something like an hour and a half, with insignificant loss, Cochrane thus found himself in possession of the Spanish frigate *Gamo*, a ship about four times the size of his own, and far more heavily armed. The disparity in size, men, and guns is best shown in the form of a table (see page 90).

Even allowing for the probable inefficiency of the Spanish seamen, due to their lack of training, the capture of the *Gamo* by her pigmy antagonist must ever remain one of the most noteworthy of single ship actions. Indeed, for the skill, cool calculation, and daring displayed, it is difficult to find its equal.

The *Gamo* was placed by Cochrane under the command of his brother, Archibald, then a midshipman, and both ships proceeded to Port Mahon, where the report of the successful action was sent to Captain Manley Dixon, the local senior naval

	SPEEDY.	*GAMO.*
Guns.	Fourteen 4-pounders.	Two 24-pounder carronades. Twenty-two long 12-pounders. Eight long 8-pounders.
Crew.	54 officers and men.	319 officers and men.
Broadside weight of shot.	28 lbs.	190 lbs.
Tonnage.	158.	Upwards of 600.
Casualties.	3 seamen killed. 1 officer and 7 men wounded.	2 officers and 13 seamen killed. 41 men wounded.

officer. In it Cochrane drew attention to the gallant services of all his officers and men, but made special mention of Lieutenant Parker, the first-lieutenant, who had been severely wounded. For some reason the letter was not sent on to the Admiralty for a month, and the consequence of this delay, says Cochrane, 'was a postponement of my post-commission for upwards of three months . . . and, what was of more consequence, a misunderstanding with Lord St. Vincent, which bore most unfavourably upon all my future prospects.'

As we shall presently show, the 'misunderstanding' with the Earl of St. Vincent, at that time First Lord of the Admiralty, was brought about by Cochrane's own action in writing to the earl a letter which was not only insubordinate, but insulting.

The *Speedy's* success in capturing ships had brought in a substantial amount of prize-money, notwithstanding the peculations of the Mediterranean prize-courts which swallowed large sums in legal charges. All the same, Cochrane had made a considerable sum in his twelve months' service in command, while even his men had received more than the usual pay of officers through prize-money alone.

Arriving at Port Mahon with the *Gamo*, the sloop refitted, and was afterwards sent to Algiers to lodge a protest with the Dey in regard to the illegal seizure of a British vessel by an Algerine cruiser. The tiny *Speedy* was not best calculated to impress the recalcitrant potentate with the might and majesty of Britain, but, anchoring in the roadstead, Cochrane went

ashore and made his way to the palace. He describes his rather heated interview with the Dey after being ushered through a series of galleries lined with axe-men, who scowled ferociously as he passed, and would cheerfully have removed his head. The Dey, indeed, threatened to consign him and his whole crew to prison for the wickedness of some British vessel in capturing an Algerine pirate, and Cochrane congratulated himself on getting back to his ship with a whole skin.

The mission to Algiers finished, the *Speedy* returned to her usual cruising ground off the Spanish coast, where, partly in concert with the *Kangaroo*, she captured more prizes. Arriving again at Port Mahon in June, Cochrane was disgusted to find that the *Gamo* had not been brought into the Navy, but that, on the other hand, she had been sold for a small sum to the Algerines, who were little better than pirates. His disgust was even greater when, instead of returning to the Spanish coast, he was ordered to convoy ' a tub of a packet ' to Gibraltar because, he says, ' the commandant lived in the house of a Spanish merchant, who had a contract for carrying the mails.'

The packet-master hoped that a course would be shaped far out at sea, beyond the reach of privateers. Cochrane thought otherwise. He was not going to miss any opportunity of making prizes, and determined to turn the unwelcome trip to account, sailed close along the Spanish coast, investigating every little creek. Near Alicante he saw some vessels at anchor and made towards them. They immediately ran themselves ashore, whereupon he got out his boats and set them on fire. One of them was laden with oil, and, the night falling very dark, the resulting blaze illuminated the sky for miles around.

Unfortunately, three French line-of-battleships happened to be in the neighbourhood. Sighting the glare, they ran in towards the coast to see what was happening, and, at dawn the next morning, July 3rd, the *Speedy* found herself cut off by the French ships *Indomptable*, *Dessaix*, *and Formidable*. Escape seemed impossible, but Cochrane was not the man to give in without a run for his money.

The *Speedy*, which was to windward, hoisted every stitch of canvas, and, when the wind fell light, manned her sweeps. The Frenchmen, however, now in full cry after her, still gained, whereupon Cochrane ordered the guns to be thrown overboard and put his ship before the wind to make every knot he could. But it was useless. The enemy were overhauling fast, and separated on different tacks to keep the sloop constantly within reach of one or the other of them.

The *Dessaix*, the nearest, was soon firing broadsides, and for three hours the *Speedy* was within intermittent range of her large opponent. Cochrane gave orders for the stores to be thrown overboard in the hope of being able to run the gauntlet and to escape by superior sailing, and, bearing up, set his studding-sails, and tried to run between the Frenchmen. The *Dessaix*, however, immediately tacked in pursuit, and in less than an hour was again within musket-shot, and let fly a broadside. Most of the round shot plunged into the sea under the *Speedy's* bows, but the scattered grape played havoc with her sails and rigging. Realising that another broadside would sink his ship and that escape was now utterly impossible, Cochrane reluctantly hauled down his colours. On going on board the *Dessaix* he presented his sword in surrender. The courtly French captain, however, refused to take it, saying "he would not accept the sword of an officer who had for so many hours struggled against impossibility," and requested him to continue to wear the weapon, although a prisoner.

Thus ended the fourteen months' cruise of the *Speedy*, during which she had taken thirty-three vessels carrying 128 guns and 533 men.[1] Puny and insignificant though she might be, her name had become a by-word and the terror of the Spanish coast. It is easy to say that Cochrane was unusually lucky, that he was vouchsafed opportunities denied to others, that the Spaniards were an easy prey, but luck does not come to those who do not also help themselves, and, young though he was, he had already proved himself a past-master in the art of guerilla warfare at sea.

As a prisoner of war on board the *Dessaix* he was kindly treated, and, three days after his capture, had the peculiar experience of witnessing from a French line-of-battleship an action with a British squadron under Sir James Saumarez.

It is unnecessary here to describe the battle off Algeciras on July 6th, 1801, which resulted in the loss of the British line-of-battleship *Hannibal* through running ashore under the guns of the Spanish batteries. After a severe fight, lasting five hours, Sir James was forced to withdraw his ships to Gibraltar with a loss of 121 killed, 240 wounded, and fourteen missing. The French and Spanish lost 317 killed and about 500 wounded.[2]

Sir James had his revenge six days later, when the French squadron, having in the meanwhile been joined by five Spanish ships from Cadiz, sailed from Algeciras.

[1] O'Byrne's *Naval Biography*.
[2] Marshall's *Royal Naval Biography*, Vol. I., part i., p. 189.

Leaving Gibraltar in pursuit with his inferior fleet, Sir James chased the enemy through the Straits. Soon after 11 o'clock at night, in the pitch darkness and with the wind blowing a gale, the *Superb*, commanded by the gallant Keats, steered between the *Real Carlos* and the *San Hermenegildo*, towering Spanish three-deckers of 112 guns. Approaching unseen from astern, the *Superb* poured a broadside into the *Real Carlos* at close range to starboard. It was utterly unexpected. The Spaniard's fore-topmast came down with a crash, its sails falling across the guns. The dry canvas was soon in a blaze.

What followed is probably one of the most spectacular and dramatic incidents that have ever occurred in naval warfare.

The *Superb*, sailing on, fired another broadside at the *San Hermenegildo*, to port. Passing ahead, Keats then extinguished all his lights and disappeared, while the two Spaniards, each mistaking the other for an enemy, opened a furious fire Fanned by the gale, meanwhile, the flames in the *Real Carlos* spread rapidly until the whole ship was in a blaze. The *San Hermenegildo* presently fell on board her and caught alight also. Both vessels burned furiously, until, at midnight, the flames reached their magazines and they blew up. Of the 1840 men on board only eighty-four were saved by the British.

Passing on, the *Superb* next engaged the *San Antonio*, of 74 guns, and compelled her to surrender. Action was resumed at daylight next morning, when, after an encounter between the British *Venerable* and French *Formidable*, the enemy succeeded in reaching Cadiz. For this victory over a squadron nearly double the strength of his own, Sir James Saumarez was rewarded with the K.B., a pension of £1,200 a year for life, the thanks of both Houses of Parliament, and the freedom of the City of London accompanied by a sword of honour.[1]

After the battle of Algeciras, the crew of the captured *Hannibal*, together with the officers and crew of the *Speedy*, had been released by the French Admiral Linois and permitted to go to Gibraltar. Cochrane himself was allowed to accompany them 'on parole,' which meant he could take no further part in the war until regularly exchanged. By the fortune of war his complete release was effected a few days later, in exchange for that of the second captain of the *San Antonio*, already mentioned as having been captured by the *Superb*.

[1] Marshall's *Royal Naval Biography*, Vol. I., part i., p. 192.

5

The Earl of St. Vincent became First Lord of the Admiralty in February, 1801. Immediately on hearing of his appointment, Sir Alexander Cochrane, Lord Cochrane's uncle, wrote asking for his nephew's promotion to the rank of post-captain for his exploit on December 21st, 1800, when, by a stratagem, he succeeded in gulling a Spanish frigate into believing the *Speedy* to be a Danish brig.

The letter, which was one of mingled persuasion and flattery, is quoted in full on pages 136 and 137 of the *Autobiography*. After congratulating the earl upon his appointment as First Lord, Sir Alexander went on to observe: 'Doubtless your Lordship has already received numerous weighty applications for the promotions of young men in the service.' He then continued by describing the *Speedy's* meeting with the Spanish frigate.

'I must confess,' he goes on, 'that where one of His Majesty's ships is saved by presence of mind, similar to what I have related, great praise is due to her commander. Your Lordship will, I hope, excuse me for trespassing a little longer in favour of my nephew, who is *now twenty-five years old, a time of life that promotion can only be of use*. His father has expended his whole fortune in discoveries which will be of great use to the public—but the real sufferer is Lord Cochrane. The liberality of your Lordship's mind will see this in its true light, and also plead my excuse for the liberty I have taken. Hoping that your Lordship's health is reinstated . . . etc.'

The italics are mine.

If this was not asking the First Lord to stretch a point in Cochrane's favour, I cannot imagine what is. The evasion of the Spanish frigate certainly showed presence of mind; but that it was sufficiently meritorious to deserve promotion to post-captain at the age of twenty-five, during a period when the list was crowded with hundreds of lieutenants, some of them between the ages of thirty-five and forty, I must beg leave to doubt.

On June 10th, 1801, having in the meanwhile heard of his nephew's capture of the *Gamo*, Sir Alexander Cochrane again wrote to the Earl of St. Vincent in the same strain.

'Even this request from a distinguished officer,' wrote our Cochrane in his *Autobiography*, 'failed to obtain what was no favour, but my right according to the invariable rule of the service.' He goes on to say that there was clearly some sinister

influence at work to stop his advancement—that perhaps he had been too outspoken in his objections when detailed to escort the packet to Gibraltar, or in his strictures of St. Vincent, when the French fleet under Admiral Bruix escaped Lord Keith in 1799.

Knowing the Earl of St. Vincent's ideas upon the subject of promotion, his antipathy to anything savouring of favouritism to officers of aristocratic birth, and his genuine anxiety to act fairly by the Navy in promoting a due proportion of deserving officers without family influence, one can understand Captain Brenton's allusion to the subject in his biography of the Earl.

'Lord St. Vincent,' he wrote, 'was so much pressed on the subject of Lord Cochrane's promotion for taking the *Gamo*, that it became almost a matter of etiquette not to make him a captain. An illustrious person is reported to have said, 'My Lord, we must make Lord Cochrane "post"'; to which Lord St. Vincent replied, 'The First Lord of the Admiralty knows no *must*.'

In point of fact, the first account of the *Speedy's* action with the *Gamo*, fought on May 6th, did not reach the Admiralty until early in August, by which time Cochrane had been captured by the *Dessaix*. Until his exchange had been effected, and until he had been acquitted of all blame by the court-martial convened to enquire into the loss of his ship, he could not, by the usual custom of the Service, be advanced in rank. He was actually promoted on August 8th, 1801, the date upon which the sentence of his acquittal was received at the Admiralty.

Instead of realising that this three months' delay in promotion was due to the fortune of war, both Cochrane and his father, perhaps naturally, considered he had been slighted. 'Reference to the Navy List at the time,' says the *Autobiography*, 'will show that the postponement of my rank was rather owing to the bane of the Admiralty—family influence—and that some of my former juniors were put over my head because it was practically imperative on the Board to promote others before me.'

It is possible that the Earl of St. Vincent did err on the side of severity in not promoting Cochrane from the date of his action with the *Gamo*. His services were certainly brilliant enough to deserve it. His Admiralty record, however, must have contained one or two black marks, and it was characteristic of St. Vincent that he hated importunity. Cochrane had been court-martialled for the altercation with

the first-lieutenant of the *Barfleur*, and had been cautioned by Lord Keith to avoid 'flippancy' towards his superiors. Moreover, reading between the lines, one suspects that, though regarded as a capable officer, he had made an unenviable name for himself in the Service as truculent and insubordinate to his superior officers when thwarted or ordered on services that did not interest him. Such a reputation would have damned any ordinary officer in the Navy. That it did not also damn him must largely be attributed to the fact that he was the son of an earl. In any case, he had little really to cavil at in being promoted to captain at the age of twenty-five and seven months. Many meritorious officers of the period never attained the rank of commander, or, more properly, 'master and commander,' an intermediate rank between lieutenant and captain, to which a lieutenant was promoted on attaining the independent command of a sloop. A 'commander' of the early nineteenth century, it should be noted, was never employed as he is now, as second-in-command to a captain.

Not content with having been promoted himself, Cochrane, quite naturally, now started to press Lord St. Vincent for the promotion of the first-lieutenant of the *Speedy*, who had been seriously wounded during the capture of the *Gamo*.

No reply was received to his first two letters, but a third elicited the answer from the earl that the application could not be entertained, since 'it was unusual to promote two officers for such a service—besides which, the small number of men killed on board the *Speedy* did not warrant the application.'[1]

The implication that the merit of an action must be judged by what is vulgarly known as the 'butcher's bill,' was not, perhaps, in the best of taste. But it is possible, in the quotation mentioned above, that Cochrane did not repeat the precise wording of the letter he received—equally possible that the letter was not written by Lord St. Vincent himself, but by some Admiralty clerk.

Intensely irritated at the reply, however, Cochrane was not content to let things be. He wrote another letter to the earl in which, very stupidly, he observed that the reasons for not promoting Lieutenant Parker because there were only three men killed on board the *Speedy*, were 'in opposition to his Lordship's own promotion to an earldom, as well as that

[1] *Autobiography of a Seaman*, p. 146.

of his flag-captain to knighthood, and his other officers to increased rank and honours : for that in the battle from which his Lordship derived his title there was only one man killed on board his own flagship, so that there were more casualties in my sloop than in his line-of-battleship.'[1]

'From the receipt of that letter Lord St. Vincent became my bitter enemy,' he observes.

One can hardly wonder. Whatever the merits of the case—and Parker certainly seems to have deserved his promotion—it was rank insubordination and extremely bad taste for a junior captain, twenty-five years of age, to write in this insulting strain to a veteran admiral, who, for the time being, was also at the head of the naval service as First Lord of the Admiralty. I can hardly imagine such a letter being written nowadays. If it were, the officer writing it would either be court-martialled, or placed immediately upon the retired list.

Not content to make the best of a bad business, however, Cochrane now increased his unpopularity by opening up a correspondence with the Board of Admiralty on the same subject. To a letter written on May 17th, 1802, he received a curt reply from the Secretary of the Admiralty, to the effect that it was not in order for officers to correspond with the Board. To another, of May 27th, he was given an answer that his letter had been read to the Board, but that the Secretary had 'nothing in command from their Lordships to communicate to you.'

'Such was the offence taken by the authorities at my persistence in my own right, and in that of the officers under my command,' he says, 'that an application to the Board for another ship met with refusal . . . it was clear that Lord St. Vincent's administration did not again intend to employ me. . . .'

The Earl of St. Vincent never forgot the insult, although, in 1803, on the renewal of the war with France, he gave Cochrane a minor command in circumstances that we shall describe later. In the following year, however, when St. Vincent had been succeeded at the Admiralty by Lord Melville, Cochrane's sin was forgiven or forgotten, and he was appointed to the new frigate *Pallas*, in which he remained until August, 1806.

To anticipate a little, Lord St. Vincent at that time was commander-in-chief of the Channel Fleet, and Cochrane was sometimes under his orders. And on April 14th, 1806, the earl wrote privately to Admiral Markham at the Admiralty,

[1] *Autobiography of a Seaman*, pp. 146, 147.

in reference to a report written by Cochrane, describing some action or other in which his ship had taken part.

'Did you ever read such a madly arrogant paragraph as that in Lord Cochrane's public letter, where he lugs in Lieutenant Parker for the avowed object of attacking me, his commander-in-chief? Pray explain this to Lord Howick. . . .'[1]

On July 19th, of the same year, moreover, St. Vincent again wrote privately to the First Lord of the Admiralty: 'The Cochranes are not to be trusted out of sight. They are all made romantic, money-getting, and not truth-telling—and there is not a single exception in any part of the family.[1]

At the time that these letters were written the Earl of St. Vincent was seventy-one years old. He was a sick man, and, as we have already shown in his memoir, was fiercely critical, both in correspondence and in speech, of those whom he disliked and distrusted. Even Nelson, whom he greatly admired, came under the lash of his caustic pen.

Though a very shrewd judge of character, however, the old earl was also sometimes intolerant, and his sweeping estimate of the Cochrane family may have erred on the side of injustice. Nevertheless, that there was some reason for his biting remarks cannot be doubted.

6

Denied for the moment the chance of further employment at sea, Cochrane spent some time investigating 'those abuses which were paralysing the Navy,' with the idea of entering Parliament and exposing them.

We need not enter into a recital of the bribery and corruption, the peculation and downright robbery, which was prevalent in many branches of the naval service, particularly in its storing and victualling departments. The Earl of St. Vincent, however, was already doing his utmost to remedy the evil state of affairs, and that Cochrane was the best type of officer to constitute himself the Quixote of the profession,' as he terms it, is open to doubt. He was too impatient, too fiercely intolerant by temperament. In spite of his disavowal that he did not wish to enter Parliament 'from any spirit of retaliation on the Admiralty,' his motive, one suspects, was not so entirely altruistic.

No immediate opportunity of entering Parliament presenting itself, however, he took lodgings in Edinburgh and became a

[1] Copies of both these letters are among the MSS. in the British Museum.

student at the University, where Lord Palmerston was one of his contemporaries. 'I . . . was only anxious to employ myself to the best advantage,' he says, 'with what success may be judged from the fact of my never being but once absent from lectures, and that to attend the funeral of a near relative.' Living simply, he saved every penny that he could for the purchase of a seat in Parliament, 'for which the only hope of election was by outbribing my antagonist.'

On the renewal of the war with France in 1803 he applied again to the Admiralty for active employment. After some difficulty he obtained command of the *Arab*, an ex-collier which sailed like a haystack. After an experimental cruise from Plymouth, the ship was sent to join a force in the Downs, guarding the coasts of Kent and Sussex against Napoleon's threatened invasion from Boulogne. Employed off the French coast, Cochrane soon found the *Arab* to be utterly useless for the service expected of her. She would not work to windward, and he reported to the admiral commanding that her employment in such duty could only result in her loss by shipwreck.

His letter went on to the Admiralty, and soon afterwards the ship was ordered to convoy the Greenland ships from Shetland, and then to cruise to the north-eastward of the Orkney Islands to protect the North Sea fisheries. 'Of this protracted cruise,' he says, 'it is sufficient to state that my appointment to the *Arab* was dated October 5th, 1803, and that she returned to England on December 1st, 1804, a period which formed a blank in my life.' It is easily to be understood that the dreary work of protecting non-existent fisheries, with never a chance of fighting or of distinction, was anathema to a man of his active and energetic disposition. His punishment, however, did not last long.

The Earl of St. Vincent had left the Admiralty on May 15th, 1804, and was succeeded by Lord Melville, and towards the end of 1804, through the influence of a relative, the Duke of Hamilton, Cochrane was appointed to the *Pallas*, a brand-new, fir-built frigate of 32 guns, the very sort of ship that his soul had yearned for.

Joining at Plymouth, he was ordered to cruise for a month off the Azores, and, crossing the Bay of Biscay, ran to the westward of Cape Finisterre and thence steered towards the Azores to meet the Spanish trade homeward bound from the West Indies.

The first richly-laden prize was captured on February 6th, 1805, and sent into Plymouth with a prize crew. A week

later, another ship fell a victim, and she, besides her ordinary valuable cargo, carried diamonds, and ingots of gold and silver. On the 15th the *Pallas* fell in with another Spaniard, carrying about 450,000 dollars (£132,000), and the day following captured a 'letter-of-marque' with more dollars.

In one of the vessels were found a number of bales marked '*invendibles*.' Opening them in the hope of discovering something especially valuable, Cochrane, to his intense disgust, found the packages to contain nothing but ecclesiastical documents, 'dispensations for eating meat on Fridays, and indulgences for peccadilloes of all kinds, with the price affixed. They had evidently formed a venture from Spain to the Mexican sin market, but the supply exceeding the demand, had been re-consigned to the manufacturers. We consigned them to the waves.'

The short cruise, however, did not pass off without incident, for on the way home the *Pallas* was chased by three French line of battleships and nearly caught.

It was blowing hard at the time with a heavy, tumbling sea, and the Frenchmen, staggering along under a press of sail, overhauled the frigate hand-over-hand. More sail must be set if the *Pallas* was to escape. But the masts might not bear the extra strain without snapping, and already the ship was heeling over with the lee main-deck guns well under water and the lee quarter-deck cannonades occasionally submerged.

Ordering every hawser in the ship to be got up, Cochrane set his men to work to secure them to the mastheads and heave them taut. Every stitch of canvas was then set, and the *Pallas*, plunging her forecastle under water, sped on at increased speed. The Frenchmen, however, had been gaining fast. Already they were within half a mile.

Realising the impossibility of saving the ship by superior sailing, Cochrane had to devise some other method. His seamanlike wit coming to his assistance, he ordered his crew to clew up and haul down every sail simultaneously, and, at the same time put the helm hard up. The frigate, checked in her stride, swung round on her heel. She shook horribly in crossing the trough of the sea, but, making sail again on the other tack, darted off again at a speed of thirteen knots, with the hawsers still fast to the mastheads.

The Frenchmen, meanwhile, not expecting this manœuvre, shot past at full speed, and ran on for several miles before they could either shorten sail or come round to the other tack. Before they were again in chase, the *Pallas* had gained several

miles, and night was rapidly approaching. To make quite certain of shaking off his pursuers Cochrane lowered a lighted cask into the water after dark and held on his course. The French, aware of the time-honoured trick, were persuaded he had altered course. When daylight came they were nowhere to be seen from the frigate.

In due course, carrying dollars, specie, and jewels, and with a golden candlestick five feet high at each masthead, the *Pallas* sailed into Plymouth sound. The candlesticks, incidentally, had been presented by the pious people of Mexico to some well-known church in Spain. Anxious to possess them for his own use, Cochrane tried to land them, only to be informed by the customs officials that he must pay a heavy sum in duty. Unwilling to do this, they were broken up and taken ashore as old gold.

How much Cochrane and his officers and men received as their shares of prize-money out of the four ships captured in ten days, we do not know for certain.[1] The amounts, however, must have been enormous. 'My portion,' he says himself, 'appeared inexhaustible,' even though the local admiral at Plymouth, on the strength of having re-copied and re-signed the *Pallas's* sailing orders from the Admiralty, claimed and received half the captain's share of the captures.

On the ship's return to Plymouth, the country was on the eve of a general election, and, with money at his command, Cochrane now saw the opportunity of getting into Parliament by standing for Honiton. England was at war, but, in spite of it, he asked for and obtained leave of absence to contest the constituency. That it was peculiar, to say the least of it, for the captain of a crack frigate to leave his ship during hostilities, does not appear to have occurred to him.

The Honiton election, however, was something of a fiasco. On being asked how much he was prepared to pay his voters, Cochrane refused to bribe at all, though a comparatively small sum might have won him his seat. His opponent, who paid five pounds for each vote, easily headed the poll. Determined to pave the way for a future occasion, however, the unsuccessful candidate sent the bellman round the town to intimate that all those people who had voted for him would receive the sum of ten guineas from his agent.

'The novelty of a defeated candidate paying double the current price expended by a successful one,' he observes,

[1] I have seen it stated that Cochrane's personal share amounted to £75,000, a sum worth considerably more than it is nowadays.

'made a great sensation. Even my agent assured me that he could have secured my return for less money. . . . I told Mr. Townsend that such payment would have been bribery, which would not accord with my character as a reformer of abuses. . . . Notwithstanding the explanation that ten guineas was paid as a reward for having withstood the influence of bribery, the impression produced on the electoral mind . . . was that my opponent had not paid half enough for being elected ; a conclusion which, by a similar process of reasoning, was magnified into the conviction that each of his voters had been cheated out of five pounds ten.' The result was what Cochrane expected. He suddenly became most popular in the constituency—his opponent, the very reverse.

In May 1805, the *Pallas* left England in charge of a convoy to Quebec, returning home again in December. From January 1806, until the end of May, she was employed with a squadron under Vice-Admiral Thornborough. During this period she repeated on the Biscayan coast of France the tactics adopted by the *Speedy* five years before on the Mediterranean seaboard of Spain, capturing one corvette, eight small trading vessels mostly laden with wine on its way to Havre for the Paris market, and causing three other craft to run ashore. Much useful work was done by an eighteen-oared galley, which Cochrane had had privately built at Deal. She was very fast, and escape from such a craft being hopeless, the crews of the enemy's coasters ran their ships ashore and landed in their boats to avoid being made prisoners.

The corvette, the *Tapageuse*, of 14 guns and ninety-five men, was most gallantly cut out by the boats of the *Pallas*, under Lieutenant Haswell, at 3 a.m. on April 6th, from her anchorage some miles up the Garonne river. The *Pallas*, meanwhile, with many of her men away in the boarding party, remained at single anchor outside. At daylight, according to Cochrane's account, three other enemy corvettes appeared to windward, and the *Pallas*, though short-handed, weighed her anchor and made sail in pursuit. One after the other the three Frenchmen were forced to run themselves ashore, and the incident, as he writes in his *Autobiography*, 'forms one of my most singular recollections, all three being deliberately abandoned and wrecked, in the presence of a British frigate, with only fifty men on board !'

This account, however, which was written years later, is not altogether accurate in detail. The first corvette, sighted at 9 a.m. on the 6th, was chased and run ashore at 1.30 p.m.

Two more corvettes were sighted soon after 2 p.m., one being pursued and driven ashore about two hours later. The third disappeared, but was discovered ashore at 8 a.m. on the 7th. And while it is possible that he had only forty *seamen* on board his frigate at the time these incidents occurred, there were probably over 100 men, if marines, boys, and 'idlers' be reckoned in the total.

In forwarding Cochrane's report to the Admiralty with Vice-Admiral Thornborough's covering letter, the Earl of St. Vincent, the commander-in-chief, observed: 'The gallant and successful exertions of the *Pallas* therein detailed, reflect very high honour on her captain, officers, and crew, and call for my warmest approbation.'

Cochrane, determined to lose no chance of cultivating his grievance against St. Vincent, refers to these words as 'cold, reluctant praise . . . no doubt intended . . . as a wet blanket on the whole affair.' He does not seem to have realised that praise of any sort from the dour old earl was praise worth receiving.

On April 25th, the *Pallas* stood into Basque roads, the anchorage off Rochefort, to reconnoitre the French squadron. In forwarding his official report, her captain wrote that the thirteen enemy men-of-war there assembled 'may be easily burned,' a remark which was remembered at the Admiralty and, as we shall see later, was to have great effect on his after career. Having amused himself by destroying four French signal stations and a coastal battery by means of landing parties, Cochrane, on May 14th, again stood in close to the Isle d'Aix to reconnoitre the French fleet. A French frigate, supported by three brigs, got under weigh to meet him. One of the brigs was disabled with a broadside, whereupon the *Pallas* turned her attention to the frigate, *La Minerve*.

The many shoals and the difficulties of navigation prevented a continuous action, but, after an hour's fighting, the superior gunnery of the *Pallas* began to tell. At about 1 p.m., considerably mauled, *La Minerve* showed signs of beating a retreat, whereupon Cochrane ordered his ship to be run alongside. Unfortunately, at the very moment the vessels came into contact, *La Minerve* grounded, the shock bringing the masts and yards of both frigates crashing down from aloft, and driving the guns of the *Pallas* back into their ports. In this position they were again discharged with crushing effect, the French crew being forced to take refuge below.

Another few moments in clear water would have resulted

in *La Minerve's* capture by boarding. But she was hard and fast aground, and the *Pallas* little more than a wreck. Moreover, two other French frigates were rapidly approaching, and there was nothing for it for Cochrane but to leave his opponent and make his escape. Cutting away and repairing the wreckage as best he could, he made sail and crawled away with the two frigates in chase. Had it not been for the *Kingfisher*, whose captain had seen her disabled condition and took her in tow, the *Pallas* might well have been captured.

A few days later, the ship was ordered home to Plymouth with a convoy and to refit. The cruise had been eminently successful. Cochrane had been essentially in his own element, a more or less independent mission to the enemy's coast. On the quarter-deck of his own ship in action he was *par excellence* a consummate seaman and fighter—audacious, cunning, and resourceful in emergency. It was only in his dealings with those of his superiors whom he disliked, and during his stormy career in Parliament, that the worst side of his character became so woefully apparent.

7

In July 1806, as there was a vacancy for Honiton, Cochrane decided to stand again. He arrived in the town in "a *vis-à-vis* and six," accompanied by a couple of lieutenants and a midshipman in full dress, and followed by several other carriages filled with officers and men from the *Pallas*, who evidently scented amusement. The boatswain, according to a contemporary account, was perched on the roof of the leading conveyance. It was his duty to regulate the procession, and to blow his whistle from time to time as a signal to the men to cheer in unison.

By the judicious disposal of his guineas on the previous occasion, Cochrane, needless to remark, was returned by a handsome majority. Having been elected, he was asked what douceur he proposed giving to those who had voted for them. 'Not one farthing!' he is stated to have replied. 'The former gift was for their disinterested conduct in not taking the bribe of five pounds from the agents of my opponent. For me now to pay them would be a violation of my own previously expressed principles.'

To assuage their feelings it was then suggested that he should give his constituents a public supper, to which he incautiously agreed. The invitation, however, was converted into

a public beanfeast, to which, not only his partisans, but also his opponents, together with their wives, children, relatives, and friends, indeed, the whole population of the town, invited themselves.

The bill, for £1,200, he refused to pay as extortionate, and the debt does not appear to have been liquidated until 1817, when, their patience exhausted, the creditors at last obtained an order to put an execution into Cochrane's house in Hampshire. For six weeks he defied the sheriff and his officers by the simple expedient of hanging bags of charcoal round his doors and windows. Aware of his reputation as a designer of infernal machines, the law officers imagined the innocent bags to contain some new and deadly explosive, liable to go off if touched. At last one man, braver than the rest, jumped in through an open window, found Cochrane comfortably eating his breakfast, and served the writ.

Immediately on entering Parliament, Cochrane used his influence to secure the promotion of Parker and Haswell, the first lieutenants of the *Speedy* and *Pallas*. His stay in the House, however, was a short one, for in August he was appointed to the frigate *Impérieuse*, in which Frederick Marryat, the novelist, was serving as a midshipman.

The ship left Plymouth on November 17th, 1806, while still in an unfit condition to go to sea. The circumstances, which nearly ended in the loss of the frigate on the rocks near Ushant, are fully described in our memoir of Marryat. Cochrane lays all the blame for the incident upon the port-admiral at Plymouth, who insisted upon the ship sailing before she was really ready for sea. That the admiral was partly to blame there is little doubt, but this state of unpreparedness was in great measure due to Lord Cochrane's having left everything to his first-lieutenant, while he was attending to politics in London.'[1]

The cruise of the *Impérieuse*, which lasted until February 11th, 1807, was more or less uneventful, though, working with the blockading squadron off Basque Road, Cochrane had the chance of capturing a few small prizes, and sending a landing party ashore to capture and destroy a battery.

Immediately on his return to England, he seems to have returned to London to pursue his career in politics. Parliament was dissolved on April 29th, 1807, and as his Honiton constituents had 'heartily sickened' him of further

[1] *The Guilt of Lord Cochrane in 1814*, by the Right Hon. Lord Ellenborough. Smith, Elder & Co., 1914.

connection with them, he made up his mind to stand for Westminster as an independent candidate.

In his election address, he described himself as 'not a mere professed reformer, but the zealous friend of reform. . . . Much has been said,' he added, 'of profligacy and profusion of public money. But what was to be said of a commander-in-chief of the Navy, who would give away those commissions which formed the stimulus, and should be the reward of honourable merit, in exchange for borough interests?'

This, again, was another veiled attack on the Earl of St. Vincent.

Of the five candidates, Cochrane and Sir Francis Burdett were elected, and on June 26th Parliament assembled to hear the delivery of the King's Speech, not, as is the custom nowadays, by His Majesty in person, but through the instrumentality of three commissioners.

Cochrane did not remain idle. On July 7th he brought forward his first motion to enquire into sinecures, places, pensions, fees, and perquisites held by members of the House of Commons, or their wives or dependents. The motion, in a modified form, was accepted, so his first skirmish in the House, in his crusade against bribery and corruption, was accepted.

On July 10th, however, he brought forward a motion on naval abuses, which was defeated without a division. He certainly disclosed many scandals, though, like many new members, he tried to do too much at once. And, however much he might deny it, his speech was nothing more nor less than an attack upon the Earl of St. Vincent and the late Board of Admiralty. Cochrane's eventual failure as a politician, it should be observed, was entirely brought about by the violence of his own personal animosities.

As a result of his speech he was ordered to rejoin the *Impérieuse*, and to sail to join Lord Collingwood's fleet in the Mediterranean. Already, though on full pay in command of a seagoing ship, he had spent most of the previous six months away from his vessel, and, in the circumstances, the order to rejoin her can hardly be considered as unusual or unnatural. The authorities, perhaps, realised that he was a dangerous man in the House, and may have anticipated he would vacate his seat if sent on foreign service. His Westminster constituents, however, solved the difficulty by giving him unlimited leave of absence from his parliamentary duties.

The next eighteen months, during which he remained in command of the *Impérieuse*, were, perhaps, the most eventful, certainly the most momentous, of his life.

8

Frederick Marryat, as already mentioned, was serving as a midshipman in the *Impérieuse* under Cochrane's command. In the section of this book devoted to the naval novelist, I have gone in some detail into the work of that frigate in the Mediterranean between January 1808, and February 1809. There is not very much more of these thirteen months that need be said here.

Arriving at Malta with her convoy on October 31st, 1807, she sailed early in November to join Lord Collingwood's fleet off Palermo, and on the 14th fell in with two strange vessels off Corsica. As it was flat calm at the time, she hoisted out her boats and sent them to investigate. The larger of the two ships showed British colours, and, on approaching within musket shot, the officer in command of the boats hailed the vessel to announce that they also were British, and that he had orders to board. This the captain of the stranger refused to allow, and, on the boats approaching, poured in a volley of grape and musketry at point-blank range. In five minutes, after considerable slaughter, the stranger was captured with a loss to the British of one man killed, and two officers and thirteen men wounded.

The ship then turned out to be a so-called Maltese privateer of ten guns, in whom various officials at Malta had a pecuniary interest. She was really a pirate, and the only people of British nationality on board were the naturalised captain, three Maltese boys, and one man from Gibraltar. All the rest of the crew were renegades from various countries, and in the tussle many of them, including the captain, had been killed.

A reward of £500 had been offered for the capture of this ship, and after much trouble and delay she was condemned as a 'droit of Admiralty.' But Cochrane and his men never received a penny of the reward from the prize-court at Malta. Instead, they were fined 500 double sequins, the rough equivalent of £500, for capturing a vessel which had been a source of income to the corrupt prize-court officials. Privateers, of course, were armed vessels owned and officered by private persons provided with a letter of marque from the government authorising them to capture enemy vessels during war. But

they always had the temptation to prey also upon friendly merchant shipping if opportunity offered, so the line of demarcation between a privateer and an out-and-out pirate was often a very narrow one.

In this particular case Cochrane had certainly been within his rights. The incident, however, set the Maltese prize-court against him, and caused the money-grabbing officials to throw every obstacle in the way of condemning future prizes taken by the *Impérieuse*, and to magnify their 'costs' to such an extent that there was often very little left for the actual captors. Cochrane, as will be seen later, did not allow himself thus to be robbed without retaliation.

In December he was ordered by Collingwood to take charge of a blockading squadron off the Ionian Islands. Before the command was handed over to him he captured three vessels near Corfu that were furnished with passes from the officer he was about to supersede. It is possible that these protective passes were legitimately issued, for it was frequently a convenience for blockading British squadrons to obtain supplies of meat, vegetables, wood, and water from islands or coasts belonging to the enemy which had no garrisons, and, in return, to permit certain merchant vessels to pass through the blockade line without hindrance. Such an arrangement really benefited the blockaders, and even Wellington gave passes to certain merchant vessels of enemy ownership during the war in the Peninsula.

Cochrane, however, viewed the granting of these permits in another light, and considered that the officer issuing them was doing so for his own benefit. There was probably a heated interview when they met, for it was at once reported to the commander-in-chief that 'from his want of discretion' Cochrane was 'unfit to be entrusted with a single ship, much less with the command of a squadron!'

Collingwood, acting on the representation, recalled the *Impérieuse*, and Cochrane was thus denied the only chance he had of ever commanding a squadron.

But it is an ill wind that blows nobody any good, for on January 31st, 1808, the *Impérieuse* was at Gibraltar with orders to 'harass the Spanish and French coasts as opportunity served.' In other words, free of the trammels of superior authority, she was given a roving commission to carry on the work so successfully performed by the *Speedy* eight years before.

'The day that passed without a shot being fired in anger, was with us a blank day,' Marryat was to write years later. The

Spanish coast, and the coasts of the Balearic Islands, were thronged with merchant shipping—vessels laden with lead and munitions of war for the French armies in Spain, vessels with wine and ordinary merchandise. And between February 9th and June 1st the *Impérieuse* captured over twenty ships and sank or destroyed about half-a-dozen more, filling in the blank days by demolishing a coastal battery or two, and by helping herself to water, sheep, pigs, and oxen from the enemy shores. With a fine ship under his command, Cochrane was in his element. As usual, he carried on his work with consummate energy, skill, and cunning.

Circumstances altered, however, with Napoleon's decree of June 6th, 1808, placing his brother Joseph on the throne of Spain, for the Spaniards, incensed beyond measure at the violation of the most sacred treaties and the horrible excesses committed by the French army in the peninsula, declared war upon France and threw in their lot with Britain.

Cochrane now received orders to render every possible assistance to the Spaniards in their struggle against the common enemy, and after fraternising with the Spanish authorities at Carthagena and in Majorca, passed, on July 5th, close to Barcelona, where he hoisted British and Spanish colours at the main and fired a salute of twenty-one guns. The French were in possession of the place, and, in retaliation, opened an ineffective fire from all their batteries.

Passing on up the coast, great numbers of people visited the *Impérieuse*, bringing presents and describing the various outrages committed by the French troops. There was little that Cochrane could do to turn the invaders out of the coastal towns ; but as the roads north and south ran in some places along the faces of the precipitous rocks at the sea edge, he could annoy the enemy by destroying them. He did so to some purpose, landing parties of seamen to destroy bridges, and to blow down the overhanging rocks so as to fill the roads with débris and render them impassable for cavalry or artillery. 'In short,' he says, 'I had taken on myself the duties of an engineer officer.'

On July 30th–31st, with a landing party of marines from the *Impérieuse*, assisted by the Spanish militia, he stormed and captured the castle of Mongat, ten miles from Barcelona, and made prisoners of the French garrison. Little more could be done off Spain for the time being, so, sailing north, with an armed tender, the frigate spent the month of August in terrorising the French coast between Marseilles and the Spanish frontier.

Here, after various encounters with enemy troops, Cochrane destroyed a battery or two and half-a-dozen coast signal stations, capturing the signal books and forwarding them to Lord Collingwood, who, with his fleet off Toulon, was thus informed by the French semaphores of all the movements of their coastwise shipping.

The *Impérieuse* carried on the same tactics during the month of September. 'With varying opposition, but with unvaried success,' says Cochrane in his official despatch, 'the newly-constructed semaphoric telegraphs—which are of the utmost consequence to the safety of the numerous convoys that pass along the coast of France—at Bourdegue, La Pinede, St. Maguire, Frontignan, Canet, and Fay, have been blown up and completely demolished, together with the telegraph houses, fourteen barracks of *gens d'armes*, one battery, and the strong tower on the lake of Frontignan. . . . *Impérieuse*—none killed, none wounded, one singed in blowing up the battery.'

'Nothing can exceed the zeal and activity with which his lordship pursues the enemy,' wrote Lord Collingwood in his covering letter to the Admiralty. 'The success which attends his enterprises clearly indicates with what skill and ability they are conducted, besides keeping the coast in constant alarm, causing a general suspension of the trade, and harassing a body of troops employed in opposing him. He has probably prevented these troops . . . from advancing into Spain by giving them employment in the defence of their own coasts.'

Yet not one word of thanks or praise did Cochrane receive from the Admiralty for his conspicuous services, because, as he says, 'I had connected myself with a radical constituency, and had set up as a reformer of naval abuses.'

The province of Catalonia, meanwhile, had become the scene of bloody warfare between the Spanish and French. The Spaniards had risen *en masse* to repel the invaders. Every town, each little village, contributed its quota of fighting men, and the woods and higher parts of the mountains, the rugged passes and impenetrable thickets, formed rallying points for the Somatenes.[1] They were more or less undisciplined, but they knew the country, were accustomed to the hard life of the mountains, and fought bravely. The French armies, on the other hand, largely bereft of supplies, were struggling in a

[1] The Somatenes, or the *levee en masse* of all able-bodied men, were bound by an ancient law of Catalonia to turn out to defend their parishes whenever the 'Somaten,' or alarm-bell, was rung from the churches.

strange, inhospitable terrain, and such was the success of the Spaniards that, by November, 1808, when the *Impérieuse* returned to her old task of harrying the French troops in and around Barcelona, 8,000 Frenchmen were practically besieged in that city. An attempt to seize Gerona had failed. The only other French garrison in Catalonia was one of 4,000 men at Figueras, close to the frontier.

Napoleon, however, had no intention of allowing the eastern gateway into Spain to slip from his grasp. He had collected a fresh army close to the frontier to relieve his troops shut up in Barcelona. The command was entrusted to St. Cyr, and in October, when that officer took over the command, Napoleon's parting words were : ' Preserve Barcelona for me ; if it is lost, *I cannot retake it with 80,000* men.'

Crossing the frontier on November 5th, St. Cyr advanced upon Rosas, a town on the coast a few miles south of the frontier. As it commanded the roads passing southward into Spain, it was a place of considerable strategic importance.

On November 19th, Cochrane, off Barcelona, heard that Rosas was invested. Sailing at once, he arrived on the 20th to be informed that a fortnight before 6,000 French troops had taken possession of the town. They had, however, been driven out by the fire of the British ships *Excellent* and *Meteor*, which had also landed seamen and marines to assist the Spaniards in the defence of the citadel and Fort Trinidad, the principal points of defence. The French thereupon started a regular siege, and had inflicted so much damage upon Fort Trinidad that Captain Bennett, of the *Fame*, who was now in charge of the operations, had been forced to withdraw his little garrison.

Bennett was Cochrane's senior. The latter, however, had discretionary orders from Lord Collingwood, so there was no interference when he decided again to garrison Fort Trinidad, and succeeded in inducing the Spanish commander to continue his resistance.

The castle of Trinidad stood on the side of a hill with an easy descent to the sea. It rather resembled a church, the chancel represented by a fort fifty feet high near the sea, the nave by another fort ninety feet high adjoining, and then a tower of 110 feet. The latter, with its back to a cliff, sheltered the other portions of the building, but was commanded by the French batteries mounted on the cliff's edge. Already they had succeeded in effecting a partial breach sixty feet up in the walls of the tower.

On November 24th Cochrane himself landed with fifty seamen and all his marines and set about making his preparations for the defence. His first action was to break down the wall of an interior arch, thus forming a deep chasm into which any storming party capturing the breach must fall headlong if they attempted to come further. With diabolical cunning, he next provided himself with all the available timber and built a species of wooden slide from the inner face of the breach. The upper part was well greased with cook's slush from the ship, and with the least pressure from behind the storming party would toboggan down the slope and fall to a depth of fifty feet. This done, he made arrangements for blowing up the magazines with time-fuses, in case evacuation should become necessary.

The French, meanwhile, augmented their batteries, and on the 25th fired upward of 300 shot at the tower and considerably enlarged the breach. The garrison, however, working under cover, succeeded in blocking it up again as fast as it was made. Cochrane, exposing himself incautiously, was struck by a splinter of stone in the face, which flattened his nose, penetrated his mouth, and caused him intolerable pain.

On the 26th the French resumed their fire, and realising that the breach must sooner or later become practicable for an assault, Cochrane erected interior barricades of palisades and sandbags, together with festoons of chain armed with large fish-hooks to act as an entanglement. The same day the fort received a welcome reinforcement of sixty Irish troops in Spanish service, who entered into the fighting with zest. At midnight on the 26th–27th, however, the French succeeded in capturing the town of Rosas after several hours' hard fighting, a detachment of 2,000 Spaniards arriving just too late to save it.

Having taken the town, the enemy redoubled their efforts against the castle. But they had lost heavily from the fire of the ships and boats, and twice sent in flags of truce with the offer of honourable capitulation, which Cochrane refused.

It was not until dawn on the 30th that the long-expected assault on the breach was delivered. Long before daylight Cochrane woke with a vague presentiment that the enemy were in possession of the castle. The intense stillness showed this to be an illusion, but, unable to sleep, he got up from his bed and started off on a tour of inspection. He came to a loaded mortar which pointed in the direction whence the French assault must come. An impulse came over him to fire it, and

to divert his mind from the anxiety which beset it, he did so. Before the echo had died away it was answered by a volley of musketry from an attacking column, who could be seen advancing with bayonets fixed.

The garrison instantly stood to arms, and presently the tops of the French scaling ladders appeared in the breach. About forty of the enemy actually succeeded in effecting a lodgment, but all of them were swept away by the fire of the defenders. Another column coming down the hillside was roughly handled, and the assaults were repulsed with severe slaughter to the French, but with a loss to the garrison of only three men killed and a few wounded. Cochrane's man-trap and fish-hooks had done their work well. Not a Frenchman had penetrated beyond the inner wall.

December 1st and 2nd passed quietly. On the 3rd the French were again opening a heavy fire on Fort Trinidad and the citadel, a mile and a quarter distant. A sortie from the citadel the same night ended in failure, and on the morning of the 5th the officer in charge, with his garrison of 2,400 men, capitulated to the enemy.

Now that the citadel had fallen, all the French troops were freed for the assault upon Fort Trinidad. Cochrane obviously could not defend the place against an army with his handful of seamen, marines, and Spanish troops, and reluctantly decided upon a withdrawal. At 11 p.m. the evacuation began in the boats of the *Magnificent*, *Fame*, and *Impérieuse*, the ships standing in close to the shore and opening a heavy fire to distract attention. By 1 a.m. everyone was out of the fort except Cochrane and his gunner, who remained behind to fire the trains to blow up the castle. Embarking in the boats, the defenders reached the ships without casualty. Unfortunately, however, one of the trains only took effect, so that Fort Trinidad was merely partially demolished. In the siege, which had lasted for ten days, the total loss to the Anglo-Spanish garrison had been five killed and twelve wounded.

Cochrane's defence of the fort was referred to by Collingwood in his official letter to the Admiralty as having been carried out with ' heroic spirit and ability.' For his services, however, and for his previous fine work in the *Impérieuse* off the coasts of France and Spain, he did not receive one single word of praise from an ungrateful Admiralty, merely a reproof for having expended more canvas, store, and ammunition than any other captain in the Service !

It is unnecessary here to describe his further operations

against the French on the Catalonian coast during the month of January 1809. Sickened of the thankless work, he had already applied to the Admiralty for leave to return to England, giving as his reason the bad state of his health which, as he says, had really suffered during nearly two years of the wear and tear of war.

Another more cogent reason, however, was his wish to expose the iniquities of the Maltese prize-court in the House of Commons, for the barefaced peculations of the officials caused most of the prize-money to be absorbed in fees and by pilfering.

The effect of this upon the Navy, he says, 'was most disastrous. . . . Captains were naturally disinclined to harass themselves and crews for nothing, and avoided making prizes certain to yield nothing but the risk and trouble of capture, and which, in addition, might bring them in debt, as was the result in my case. . . . It was always my aim to serve my country before my own interests,' he adds, in referring to his recent work of harassing the French Army in Spain, 'and in this case I judged it better to do so where the service could be most effectual. Prizes, of which the proceeds were monopolised by a body of corrupt officials . . . were not worth troubling ourselves about.'

His words are rather contradictory. At one moment he asserts it was always his desire to serve the country before himself; and the next, that he operated off the Spanish coast against the French *because* it was not worth taking prizes.

The corruption of the Admiralty prize-courts in the Mediterranean was certainly a public scandal. Whatever he may say, however, it is idle to pretend that Cochrane was not unduly fond of prize-money, or, as the Earl of St. Vincent put it, that he was not 'money getting.' But prize-money in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries was the bane of the Service. It occasioned more quarrels, bickerings, and jealousies between senior officers than any other cause, and it was a high-minded officer indeed who was not occasionally tempted to forsake the rigid pathway of public duty if he saw a chance of enriching himself by making captures. Money, like political jobbery, was at the root of many Service evils.

And another reason that Cochrane gives for his desire to return home, was his wish to be placed in command of a squadron of three or four frigates to spread terror on the Atlantic seaboard of France, so as to make it impossible for the French to send an army into Western Spain. There was

a great deal to be said for his suggestion. The work of the *Impérieuse* in the Mediterranean had certainly shown the surprising effect of a single frigate in hampering the free movement of an army operating ashore.

9

In March, 1809, a French fleet of ten sail-of-the-line and four frigates under Admiral Allemand had concentrated in Aix Roads, the anchorage off the naval port of Rochefort. A previous attempt to proceed to the West Indies and there to harass the British colonies and trade had been foiled, and the French were now blockaded in Aix Roads by a British fleet under Admiral Lord Gambier.

Spurred on by the outcries of influential merchants who feared for the safety of their valuable West Indian trade if the French managed to escape, the Admiralty were anxious to destroy them at their anchorage. Gambier, however, a brave but weak officer of strong religious tendencies, or what was then known in the Navy as a ' Blue Light,' had shown little energy in the matter. On account of the rocks and shallow water, he did not consider it prudent to attack. The risks, he considered, were far too great, and when asked for his opinion as to the use of fireships, had denounced their use as ' hazardous, if not desperate,' and ' a horrible and unchristian mode of warfare.'

Gambier, in short, was not endowed with the characteristics of a Nelson. Lacking in energy and aggressively religious, he did his utmost to save the souls of his officers and men instead of using them in some real effort to accomplish the destruction of the French. The senior officers of his fleet, moreover, were divided into two bitterly hostile cliques—those who shared, or pretended to share, the commander-in-chief's religious convictions, and those who strongly objected to religious orthodoxy as a means of preferment and promotion.

Cochrane, summoned to the Admiralty, was asked by the First Lord—Lord Mulgrave—for his opinion as to the use of fireships to destroy the French fleet in Aix Roads. Quite rightly, he reminded Lord Mulgrave that he was being asked to suggest means of carrying out an attack in the method already strongly condemned by Lord Gambier and other senior officers. In short, his position was invidious, if not impossible. The First Lord, however, replied that it was no time to observe the niceties of professional etiquette. The

Admiralty were bent on striking some decisive blow. After giving his ideas, Cochrane was asked if he would put his plans into execution. Fearing the jealousy of other senior officers in the fleet, he demurred.

Not content, however, Lord Mulgrave again sent for him and informed him that the Board of Admiralty could listen to no further objections or delay. 'I will make it all right with Lord Gambier,' the First Lord said. 'Make yourself easy about the jealous feeling of senior officers; I will so manage it with Lord Gambier that the *amour propre* of the fleet shall be satisfied."

Cochrane's scruples were at last overcome. He was forced to consent. Fireships, explosion-vessels, and craft carrying Congreve rockets were ordered, but, without waiting for them, the *Impérieuse* sailed from Plymouth. Arriving in Basque Roads on April 3rd, her captain reported himself to Lord Gambier, to be received with 'great urbanity.' With the other senior officers it was different. Lord Mulgrave had done nothing to soothe their ruffled feelings. Cochrane was the junior captain, and, when his plans became known, he was regarded as an influential interloper sent to take all the credit from those to whom it rightly belonged.

Rear-Admiral Eliab Harvey, a veteran officer who had commanded the 'fighting *Temeraire*' at Trafalgar and was now one of Gambier's junior flag officers, came on board the flagship with a list of officers and men who had volunteered, under his orders, to carry out the service now thrust upon Cochrane by the Admiralty. Furiously angry, he abused Gambier to his face in the presence of other officers, and upon his own quarter-deck, in a way that no other commander-in-chief has ever been abused before or since. He had never seen a man, he said, more unfitted for the command of a fleet than Gambier. His conduct was methodistical and jesuitical. Since he had been in command he had employed his officers in mustering the ship's companies for prayers and catechism and the distribution of tracts, instead of attempting to attack the French.

The strictures were partially true, though the rear-admiral's outburst, which ended in his court-martial[1] at Portsmouth on May 22nd, 1809, did not tend to improve matters.

[1] Rear-Admiral Harvey was sentenced to be dismissed from the Service. Reinstated by reason of his previous gallant services, he attained the ranks of vice-admiral and admiral by seniority, but was never employed again. He was created a K.C.B. by the Prince Regent in 1815 upon the extension of the Order of the Bath into three classes.

On the very evening of his arrival, Cochrane had taken the *Impérieuse* close inshore to reconnoitre the French fleet at anchor. Satisfied that an attack would be successful if carried out as a surprise, he persuaded Lord Gambier not to await the arrival of the fireships from England, but to prepare, with the fleet's own appliances, some transports which happened to be present. The commander-in-chief consented, and while the fleet prepared the fireships, Cochrane himself worked at the explosion vessels. These latter were designed to explode among the enemy's fleet, in the hope that the French crews would mistake every fireship for an explosion vessel. In the resulting panic in a crowded anchorage, with some ships making sail and others cutting their cables, most of the Frenchmen would probably drive ashore.

The explosion vessels, which were really huge floating mines, were terrible engines enough. Their floors were made as firm as possible by means of tightly wedged logs, and on top of this rigid foundation, set on end, were a large number of spirit and water casks, into which 1500 barrels of gunpowder had been emptied. They were bound round with hempen cables to cause the explosion to take an upward effect, and on top of the powder casks were several hundred shells and nearly 3000 hand-grenades, the whole being compressed, as nearly as possible, into a solid mass by means of wedges and sand.

On April 10th, the fireships having arrived from England, Cochrane urged Gambier to permit an attack to be made the same night in order that the French might have no time in which to make defensive preparations. Gambier refused. The fireships, he said, might be boarded from the French guard-boats and the crews murdered. Cochrane thereupon retorted that, if he went ahead in his explosion vessel beforehand and blew her up, no guard-boats would be likely to board the fireships. To this Gambier replied that if Cochrane chose to destroy himself it was his own affair. It was his duty, as commander-in-chief, to take care of the lives of others. He would not place the crews of the fireships in palpable danger. Remonstrance was useless, and Cochrane, foaming with impatience at his senior's vacillation, was forced to obey.

The nature of the newly arrived ships had soon been discovered by the French, who lost no time in altering the position of their fleet.[1] Their line-of-battleships, moreover, struck their

[1] Le 10 il arriva 16 batimens, qui me parurent des transports ou brûlots. Je fis dégréer les mats de perroquets, et caler ceux de hune . . .' (Vice-Admiral Allemand's despatch of April 12th.)

topmasts and unbent their sails so as to expose as little inflammable matter as possible aloft, while their boats and launches, seventy-three in all, were armed and stationed in five divisions for the purpose of towing off the fireships when the expected attack came. A boom of spars and cables, moored with anchors, had also been improvised by the French as a further protection to their fleet. The obstruction, however, does not appear to have been really formidable.

On April 11th it blew hard from the northward with a considerable sea. Lord Gambier consented to the attack being carried out, and, after dark, the officers who had volunteered to command the fireships were assembled on board the flagship and given their final instructions.

The *Impérieuse* proceeded to a position within about three miles of the French fleet, where she anchored. The frigates *Aigle*, *Unicorn*, and *Pallas* lay close at hand to receive the crews of the fireships when their work was done, while the brigs *Lyra* and *Redpole* had been detailed to anchor close to the edges of the shoals and to hoist lights to show the fireships the way in. Three explosion-vessels had been prepared, one, in reserve, being made fast astern of the *Impérieuse*. A second, the largest, had been placed under Cochrane's personal command, who had with him Lieutenant Bissel and a party of four volunteers. The other was commanded by Lieutenant Urry Johnson who had Mr. Midshipman Marryat as his second-in-command.

The night was dark, with a fair wind and a strong flood-tide, when Cochrane embarked in his explosion-vessel and led the way in. He rapidly neared the estimated position of the advanced French ships, and when at a suitable distance ordered his crew into their boats and personally lit the fuses. Embarking, he then urged the men to pull for their lives against the heavy wind and sea, and pull they did. Their progress was dismally slow.

Five minutes passed in dreadful anxiety . . . six . . . seven. Then, about eight minutes before the appointed time, there came the roar of a mighty explosion. The fuses had played them false.

Sea and sky were dyed red with the lurid glare caused by the simultaneous ignition of 1,500 barrels of powder. The flash subsided, to leave the air filled with shells, grenades, rockets, and masses of shattered wreckage hurtling skywards, curving overhead, and then falling into the sea in all directions. The sea rose in a great breaking wave which all but swamped the struggling boat—then dropped her into a watery chasm

from which the occupants never expected to emerge. But the danger passed as suddenly as it had come, and they pulled on for the lights of the *Impérieuse* twinkling in the distance.

The fireships, meanwhile, twenty in all, were advancing towards the French and were soon set in flames. Cochrane, in the *Autobiography*, says they were badly mishandled, some being kindled four and a half miles from the enemy, others being brought to on the wrong tack, and six passing a mile to windward of the French fleet. 'I could scarcely credit my own vision when I saw the way in which they were handled; most of them being fired and abandoned before they were abreast of the vessels anchored as guides'—e.g. the *Lyra* and *Redpole*.

'Four only,' he adds, 'reached the enemy's position, and not one did any damage!'

This statement is hardly correct. The following extract is from the letter of a French officer serving in the *Océan*:

'A frigate fireship was directing her course towards the *Océan*. We veered out several fathoms of our north-west cable, but the vessel was still nearing us. The *Régulus* had just cut her cables, and was endeavouring to get clear of a vessel which threatened to burn her. The movement of the *Régulus* obliged us to cut our north-west cable. We set the mizzen-topsail to the mast to assist the ship, but, as soon as we brought up by our south-east anchor, three fire-vessels made towards us. What was to be done? We were obliged to cut this cable also, hoist the fore-topmast staysail, loose the foresail, and steer so as to avoid the Palles, the bank of rocks on which the *Jean Bart* was lost. At 10 we grounded; and immediately afterwards a fireship, in the height of her combustion, grappled us athwart our stern. For ten minutes that she remained in this situation, we employed every means in our power to prevent the fire from catching the ship. Our engines played upon and completely wetted the poop: with spars we hove off the fireship, and with axes we cut the lashings of her grapnels fastened to the ends of her yards, but the *chevaux de frise* on her sides held her firmly to us. In this deplorable situation we thought we must be burnt, as the flames from the fireship covered all our poop. Two of our line-of-battleships, the *Tonnerre* and *Patriote*, at this time fell on board of us. The first broke her bowsprit in our starboard main rigging, and destroyed our main channels. Providence now aided us. Just as the fireship athwart our stern began to drive forward along our starboard side, the *Tonnerre* separated herself from

us. Unless this had happened, the fireship would have fallen into the angle formed by the two ships, and would infallibly have burnt them. The fire-vessel having drifted as far forward as to be under our bowsprit, we held her there some time, in order to afford time to the *Tonnerre* and *Patriote* to get out of her reach. While this fire-vessel was on board of us, we let the cocks run in order to drown the magazine, but the flow of water was too slow for the purpose. We lost fifty men at least, through their zealous exertions to disengage the fire-ships ; they fell into the sea and were drowned, but our boats saved a number of others. A short time after we had so fortunately escaped being burnt, another fire-vessel was making for our starboard quarter ; we fired our broadside and cut away her mainmast. This, fortunately, occasioned her to wear, and she passed close alongside of us. All the remainder of the night we were surrounded by vessels of fire. Our guns were constantly firing, even on British boats towing some of the fire-vessels. The one that grappled us on the poop was towed by a boat, manned by fifteen or sixteen men ; we fired on her and obliged her to let go the tow. In this disastrous night the *Cassard* had five men killed and fifteen mortally wounded by a shot from one of the fireships.'[1]

Even if we allow for possible exaggeration, and the fact that the French were panic-stricken, this account, written by an eye-witness for the other side, bears the impress of the truth. And it by no means tallies with Cochrane's story in the *Autobiography*, which imputed blame to most people but himself.

Reconstructing the episode, there is little doubt that his explosion-vessel, either through premature ignition or the shortness of the fuses, blew up in a position where she did no material damage to the French. It is evident, also, that only a very small proportion of the fireships reached their goal. The moral effect, however, both of the explosion-vessels and fireships, was incalculable.

The French, anchored in a crowded roadstead, fired wildly in all directions. Ships cut their cables and fell foul of each other while trying to make sail in their efforts to escape. Ship after ship was driven ashore by the strong wind and tide, and when dawn broke on April 12th, only the *Foudroyant*, of 80 guns, and the *Cassard*, of 74, were still afloat. All the remainder —the *Océan*, of 120 guns ; the *Tourville*, *Régulus*, *Patriote*, *Jemappes*, *Tonnerre*, *Aquilon*, and *Ville de Varsovie*, all of 74 guns ;

[1] James's *Naval History of Great Britain*, Vol. V., pp. 109–110.

the frigates *Indienne*, *Elbe*, *Pallas*, and *Hortense*, together with the *Calcutta*, a British East Indian, captured off St. Helena some time before—were all hopelessly aground. In short, a French fleet of eight line-of-battleships, four frigates, and the store ship *Calcutta*, lay helpless on the shoals around their former anchorage. They were heeled over on their bilges by the fall of the tide, so that their vulnerable bottoms were exposed to shot. They were defenceless, completely at the mercy of the British.

10

After his adventure in the explosion-vessel, Cochrane had reached the *Impérieuse* sometime after midnight. She was still at anchor near the island of Aix, and at dawn, seeing that many of the enemy's vessels were ashore and could easily be attacked, he signalled to this effect to the commander-in-chief. Gambier, whose fleet was anchored some six miles further seaward, did nothing.

At 7 a.m. the *Impérieuse* again signalled, 'All the enemy's ships, except two, are ashore,' which was acknowledged by the answering pendant. Gambier, however, showed no signs of moving, and, beginning to lose patience, the fiery Scotsman hoisted signal after signal to egg on his superior to do something.

'Half the fleet can destroy the enemy,' was the message his flags spelled out, followed by several others, and then the signal, 'The frigates alone can destroy the enemy.'

Eight o'clock came, then nine, and still Gambier's fleet did not move. The tide was now rising fast, so that any vessel sent in would have the flood-tide to come in and the ebb-tide to return. The same flood-tide, however, would also enable the stranded Frenchmen to heave themselves off and escape destruction. Already they were throwing overboard their guns and stores to lighten themselves.

'The enemy is preparing to heave off,' Cochrane signalled, at the same time moving his own ship closer to the enemy. But the commander-in-chief's only reply was to call a council of war on board the flagship. It was not until 10.45, indeed, that the fleet finally weighed its anchors and approached the scene of action. To Cochrane's fury, however, it again came to an anchor rather over three miles from the island of Aix. Gambier, evidently fearful of the responsibility of sending his heavier ships in among the intricate shoals, or convinced in his own mind that the destruction of the French had already

been attained by the mere fact that they were aground, did not intend to attack.

Noon came, and the French flagship, the *Océan*, had succeeded in getting herself afloat, while four other ships near her were busy making efforts to heave off. Half an hour later the *Etna*, a bomb-vessel carrying a 13-inch mortar accompanied by three gun-brigs, were sent in by Gambier to engage the French vessels still ashore.

At one o'clock, realising that no serious attack was contemplated, Cochrane determined to force the commander-in-chief's hand. Without making sail, lest he should be recalled, he ordered the anchor of the *Impérieuse* to be hove atrip, and the ship, carried by wind and tide, drifted stern-first towards the enemy. At 1.30 he suddenly made sail after one of the enemy's ships that was escaping, and ten minutes later hoisted the signal 'Enemy superior to chasing ship, but inferior to the fleet.' No attention was paid to this, and at 1.45 he again signalled 'In need of assistance,' being at that time within range of several line-of-battleships.

Opened fire upon by the *Calcutta*, which was still ashore, Cochrane came to an anchor and returned her fire with broadsides, while engaging the *Aquilon* and *Ville de Varsovie* with his bow guns.

Then, at last, Gambier sent in a satisfactory reinforcement, consisting of the 74-gun ships *Valiant* and *Revenge*, accompanied by four or five frigates.

The *Calcutta's* crew soon abandoned their ship, which was taken possession of by a boat from the *Impérieuse*, and on the arrival of the line-of-battleships and the frigates they also anchored and opened fire on the *Aquilon* and *Ville de Varsovie*, which struck their colours at 5.30.

Soon afterwards the French *Tonnerre* was abandoned and set on fire by her crew, which escaped in their boats. The *Calcutta* had also been set ablaze by a party from the *Impérieuse*, and, in the course of the evening, both ships blew up.

The tide, meanwhile, was falling, and the British ships who had been engaging the enemy were anchored in a perilous situation. Had a breeze sprung up from the wrong direction they must have been wrecked on the shoals to leeward. They therefore withdrew to a safer anchorage for the night, though the *Revenge*, *Valiant*, and *Impérieuse* all grounded in the process. They were got off without material damage, though the *Valiant*, which must have been drawing at least twenty-three

feet of water, was ashore for several hours. At low water she had seventeen feet of water alongside.

At daybreak the next morning, April 13th, Gambier recalled the ships which had taken part in the action, and at 4 a.m. they got under weigh, having previously set fire to the *Aquilon* and *Ville de Varsovie*.

The French *Foudroyant* and *Cassard*, meanwhile, who had not run ashore with the remainder, had tried to escape up the Charente, and were now hard aground in the channel leading to that river. Deciding to disobey his orders, Cochrane determined to attack them. Accompanied by the *Pallas* and four brigs—the *Beagle*, *Growler*, *Conflict*, and *Encounter*—he proceeded to make his preparations, only to see his signal of recall hoisted by the flagship. To this he replied by signal—'The enemy can be destroyed,' of which no notice was taken.

Soon afterwards a boat brought him a letter from Gambier: 'You have done your part so admirably that I will not suffer you to tarnish it by attempting impossibilities, which, I think, as well as those captains who have come from you, any further effort to destroy those ships would be. You must, therefore, join as soon as you can . . . as I wish for some information before I close my despatches.' In a postscript the commander-in-chief added: 'I have ordered three brigs and two rocket-vessels to join you, with which, and the bomb, you may make an attempt on the ship that is aground on the Palles, or towards Ile Madame, but I do not think you will succeed; and I am anxious that you should come to me, as I wish to send you to England as soon as possible. You must, therefore, come as soon as the tide turns.'

Cochrane, naturally, was furious at the contradictory nature of this letter. In one paragraph he was ordered to rejoin the fleet. In the next he was permitted to attack certain ships; but was ordered to return as soon as the tide turned!

'My lord,' he replied by letter. 'I have just had the honour to receive your lordship's letter. We *can* destroy the ships that are on shore, which I hope your lordship will approve of.'

The *Impérieuse* had sustained considerable damage the day previous, and Cochrane spent the 13th in refitting his ship, while the *Etna* continued to fire shell until her 13-inch mortar split, and all her 10-inch shell were expended. Nothing really serious was attempted because of Gambier's unwillingness to send in more ships.

At daylight on the 14th the enemy were still in the same

helpless position, some of them quietly disembarking guns or stores into lighters lying alongside. And once more Cochrane asked for permission to attack. Once more he was recalled, to which he replied, 'Shall we unmoor?' The recall was repeated, and shortly afterwards he received another letter from Gambier: 'It is necessary I should have some communication with you before I close my despatches to the Admiralty. I have, therefore, ordered Captain Wolfe to relieve you in the services you are engaged in. I wish you to join me as soon as possible, that you may convey Sir Harry Neale to England, who will be charged with my despatches, or you may return to carry on the service where you are.'

Again Lord Gambier did not seem to know his own mind. This time, however, Cochrane had no alternative but to obey, and, reluctantly leaving the scene of action, rejoined the fleet and went on board the *Caledonia*.

We can almost imagine the scene. On the one hand the timid, vacillating commander-in-chief who was frightened of taking responsibility: on the other, the impetuous, fiery-tempered Scotsman who was not given to mincing matters, and had seen the total destruction of the enemy neglected through what he considered, and not without reason, was sheer incompetence and jealousy of himself.

Speaking plainly, Cochrane told Gambier that the extraordinary hesitation displayed in the attack could only have arisen from his having been employed in the work in preference to senior officers from the fleet. And now, at the eleventh hour, he begged the commander-in-chief to send in Admiral Stopford to complete the business. 'I apologised for the freedom I used, stating that I took the liberty as a friend,' says the *Autobiography*, 'for it would be impossible, as matters stood, to prevent a noise being made in England.'

Gambier was very displeased at his subordinate's outspokenness. 'If you throw blame upon what has been done,' he replied, 'it will appear like arrogantly claiming all the merit for yourself.'

Some further argument ensued, whereupon Gambier cut the matter short by giving him written orders to take Sir Harry Neale to England with despatches. Accordingly, on April 15th, the *Impérieuse* sailed for Plymouth.

Great damage had been done to the French. Of their ten line-of-battleships three were burnt; three were so damaged as to be unfit for sea; two had lost most of their guns and stores, and had cut away their anchors and cables; and two were

undamaged. Of their four frigates, one had been burnt; one was wrecked; and two remained fit for service.

'Success as splendid as that gained at the Nile or Copenhagen had awaited the British admiral.'[1] 'It had been brought within his reach by daring and skill not inferior to that of Nelson himself. But Nelson was not at the head of the fleet. Inferior to none of the captains who followed that immortal flag in personal gallantry, Lord Gambier wanted the moral courage, the confidence in himself, which, in hazardous circumstances, is requisite for the decisive success in a commander.'[1]

It is impossible to say whether Gambier's extraordinary apathy was dictated by ignorance of the real situation, by want of nerve, or sheer weakness of character, but the fact remains that a golden opportunity of totally annihilating the French had been cast aside. French historians referred to the British commander-in-chief's conduct by the single uncomplimentary term 'mollesse,' while, said Napoleon, 'Cochrane not only could have destroyed the whole of the French ships, but he might and would have taken them out, had the English admiral supported him as he ought to have done . . . Fear deprived the French captains of their senses. Had Cochrane been supported, he would have taken every one of the ships.'

The French Emperor, moreover, brought the captains of the lost ships to trial. One, Lafond of the *Calcutta*, was shot for surrendering to the *Impérieuse*, an inferior ship to his own, while two others were sentenced to imprisonment.

Lord Gambier, as we shall presently see, was tried by court-martial at Cochrane's instigation and was honourably acquitted, to receive a formal vote of thanks from both Houses of Parliament. Cochrane, for his share in the operations, was created a Knight of the Bath, a reward he most richly deserved. Indeed, but for his own folly, the affair at Aix Roads might well have proved the turning point in his career. His countrymen would soon have formed their own ideas as to what had really occurred, and public opinion would judge Lord Gambier as he really should have been judged.

Instead, burning with natural indignation, he allowed his wrath and impetuosity to get the upper hand. In his consuming anxiety to prove himself in the right, and to prove to the world that Gambier's conduct was not what it should have been, he was to damn, not Lord Gambier, but himself.

[1] *History of Europe*, by Sir Archibald Alison, Bart., Vol. VIII., p. 235.

II

Lord Gambier's despatch, though full of inaccuracies, was very complimentary to Cochrane. It did not give him credit for leading the night attack in the explosion-vessel, but described his advance next morning in the *Impérieuse* as a service 'which could not be exceeded by any feat of valour hitherto achieved by the Royal Navy.' And for these services Cochrane, on April 26th, 1809, was rewarded by His Majesty with the Knighthood of the Bath, no mean reward for a junior post-captain of thirty-three.

The government was naturally delighted with what, in spite of Gambier's procrastination and lack of energy, had been accomplished in Aix Roads, for the French fleet had virtually ceased to exist. It soon came to Cochrane's notice, however, that a vote of thanks to the commander-in-chief was to be proposed in the House of Commons. At once the adamant Scotsman informed Lord Mulgrave, the First Lord of the Admiralty, that, as a Member of Parliament for Westminster, he would oppose the motion, on the ground that Gambier had clearly failed in his duty.

Lord Mulgrave tried to dissuade him from such a course of action, which could only be injurious to the government and detrimental to Cochrane himself. But the latter would not hear of it. Speaking as a Member of Parliament, he said, he did not recognise Gambier's services at all, while his duty to his constituents forbade his acquiescence in a public misrepresentation. Lord Mulgrave retorted by telling him that the public would not discriminate between Cochrane the Member of Parliament and Cochrane the naval officer, and that his persistence would only raise a storm about his own head.

'If you are on service,' the First Lord added, 'you cannot be in your place in Parliament. Now, my lord, I will make you a proposal. I will put under your orders three frigates, with *carte blanche* to do whatever you please on the enemy's coasts in the Mediterranean. I will further get you permission to go to Sicily, and embark on board your squadron my own regiment, which is stationed there. You know how to make use of such advantages.'

Cochrane refused the offer, saying that the country would regard his acceptance as a bribe to say nothing. In so doing, he undoubtedly made the greatest mistake of his life. In command of an independent squadron operating against the enemy, his position would have been stronger than ever.

Perverse and obstinate, however, he could not see it—could not see, moreover, that if he did wish for an enquiry into Gambier's conduct, the legitimate, straightforward method was to press for his court-martial, not to attack him before an unprofessional body like the House of Commons, where the admiral could not defend himself. The fact was, however, that Gambier was one of the government's men, and had been a member of the Board of Admiralty. Cochrane was bent upon embarrassing the government, for which, as a politician, he had the greatest dislike.

On hearing of Cochrane's opposition to the vote of thanks, the commander-in-chief immediately applied for a court-martial, and was called upon by the Admiralty to forward a fresh report of the action in Aix Roads. In this despatch, sent in on May 10th, Cochrane's services were passed over. On the 20th of the same month, moreover, the Admiralty wrote to Cochrane demanding to know the grounds upon which he objected to the moving of the vote of thanks. Seeing in this an intention to entrap him into becoming Gambier's prosecutor, he returned an evasive reply, referring the Admiralty to the logs and signal-logs of the fleet, which, he said, would furnish full particulars and enable accurate conclusions to be drawn.

After two months' delay, the court-martial assembled on board the *Gladiator* at Portsmouth on July 26th, and from the first, as was only natural, Cochrane was regarded as the commander-in-chief's accuser. We need not dwell upon the falsification of charts and logs, and the contradictory evidence of various witnesses. From the very first the court was favourable to Gambier, and no evidence of any kind was accepted against him. 'Nothing in such a court could be made to tell against the admiral,' writes the Hon Sir J. W. Fortescue. 'Log-books, as well as charts, were tampered with and garbled for the defence; while a certain disorder in the log-books of the *Impérieuse* was made to tell heavily against the prosecution.'[1]

The court-martial terminated on August 9th, and the result was merely what might have been expected. No charge against Gambier was held to be proved. His conduct throughout the Aix Roads operations had been marked 'by zeal, judgment, and ability, and an anxious attention to the welfare of His Majesty's service.' He was adjudged to be 'most honourably acquitted.'

[1] *Dundonald*, by the Hon. Sir J. W. Fortescue. Macmillan's 'English Men of Action' series, p. 88.

A greater travesty of a trial, or a more glaring instance of partiality, it would be difficult to imagine. 'The issue was not naval but political, and the government stuck at no shift, however shameful, to ensure victory.'[1]

'From this time forward,' wrote Cochrane in the *Autobiography*, 'I never trod the deck of a British ship of war at sea, as her commander, till thirty-nine years afterwards I was appointed by her present most gracious Majesty to command the West India Squadron.'

Applying to rejoin the *Impérieuse* for the ill-fated Walcheren expedition soon after the court-martial, he was twice refused, so devoted himself to parliamentary business. The motion for Gambier's vote of thanks was carried in the House of Commons by 171 votes to nineteen, and he was subsequently thanked by the House of Lords also. Cochrane, thoroughly disgusted, now turned to the rectification of naval and other abuses in the House of Commons, and on May 11th, 1810, made a remarkable speech on the scandals of the pensions bestowed by the government. A few sentences will show its general tenor :

'The pension list is not formed on any comparative rank or merit, length of service, or other rational principle, but appears to me to be dependent on parliamentary influence alone.' He went on to quote the cases of officers who had lost arms and legs in battle receiving pensions of between £40 and £91 5*s*. a year while 'Sir A. S. Hammond retires on £1,500. The brave Sir Samuel Hood, who lost his arm, has only £500, whilst the late Secretary of the Admiralty retires, in full health, on a pension of £1,500 per annum !'

'I find upon examination that the Wellesleys receive from the public £34,729, a sum equal to 426 pairs of lieutenants' legs, calculated at the rate of Lieutenant Chambers' legs. Calculating for the pension of Captain Johnstone's arm, viz. £45, Lord Arden's sinecure (£20,358) is equal to the value of 1,022 captains' arms. The Marquis of Buckingham's sinecure alone (£20,693) will maintain the whole ordinary establishment of the victualling department at Chatham, Dover, Gibraltar, Sheerness, Downs, Heligoland, Cork, Malta, Mediterranean, Cape of Good Hope, Rio de Janeiro, and leave £5,460 in the Treasury. Two of these comfortable sinecures would victual the officers and men serving in all the ships in ordinary in Great Britain, viz. 117 sail-of-the-line, 105 frigates, twenty-seven sloops, and fifty hulks.' Cochrane's happiest

[1] *Dundonald*, p. 87.

hit of all was that in reference to his respected grandmother, Mrs. Gilchrist, who had a pension of £100 for the services of her husband. Though she had been dead for eight years, 'some patriotic individual had been drawing her pension!'

These, and other glaring naval abuses, certainly required looking into; but in the process of pointing them out, Cochrane became a very unpopular man. The ministerial newspapers made fun of him, the following being a fair sample:

> You fight so well and speak so ill,
> Your case is somewhat odd,
> Fighting abroad you're quite *at home*
> Speaking at home—*abroad*;
> Therefore your friends, than hear yourself,
> Would rather of you hear;
> And that your name in the *Gazette*
> Than *Journals* should appear.

But he soon wearied of politics, and in June forwarded a letter to the Admiralty giving a detailed scheme for sporadic attacks on the French coast. The *Impérieuse*, meanwhile, had been in command of an acting-captain, and Cochrane, as we know, had twice been refused permission to rejoin her. Now that he had become a thorn in the side of the government, however, the Admiralty were anxious to get him out of England, and affected to consider that he had unjustifiably absented himself from his ship. The answer to his suggestion was an immediate demand from the Admiralty to know on what day during the ensuing week it was his intention to join his ship.

Replying in a long letter three days later, Cochrane proceeded to argue the point, and concluded by saying that he had still some important matters to bring up in Parliament, and did not wish the *Impérieuse* to be detained on his account. In his reply of June 12th the First Lord, and not without reason, declined to be drawn. 'As I do not conceive it either my public duty,' he wrote, 'it is by no means my private inclination to be drawn into any official controversy with your lordship, either in your capacity of captain of a frigate in His Majesty's service or as Member of Parliament.' He continued by wishing 'to be distinctly informed' whether or not Cochrane intended to join his ship, and, after paying a tribute to his 'activity and gallantry,' concluded by saying that if he did not join he would be forced to consider that he wished to be superseded.

The day following, in another long letter, Cochrane feared it was impossible for him to be in readiness to join the *Impérieuse* within the time specified. As a result, he was superseded in her command.

'A more unjust order from a lay Lord of the Admiralty than this, to join the *Impérieuse* and proceed on foreign service, was never issued from the Admiralty,' he wrote in the *Autobiography*.

Where the injustice lay it is difficult to see. He had refused a squadron when it was offered to him after the affair at Aix Roads. Instead, he had deliberately elected to remain at home to attack Lord Gambier, and, through him, the government. That he should cavil at receiving peremptory orders to rejoin his vessel by a certain date is nothing short of ludicrous.

He seems throughout to have regarded himself as the injured party, whereas he had undoubtedly made a convenience of the Service. The First Lord, moreover, in writing two letters requesting and advising him to rejoin his frigate, had treated him with considerable generosity, more generosity than he deserved.

Cochrane, indeed, with a bee in his bonnet, was his own worst enemy. Reading the *Autobiography* and forming one's own conclusions, one may sometimes feel sympathetic towards him ; but more often supremely impatient at his short-sighted folly and obstinacy.

12

At the beginning of 1811, finding that the condemnation of the many prizes taken by the *Impérieuse* in the Mediterranean had actually brought him into debt instead of leaving him and his men a substantial sum in prize-money, Cochrane determined to visit Malta to unearth the iniquities of the Admiralty prize-court in that island. He had already discovered that one official illegally combined in his single person the functions of marshal and proctor, charging fees in both these offices.

Immediately upon his arrival he demanded that the prize accounts of the *Speedy* and *Impérieuse* should be taxed according to the authorised scale of charges. This was refused, so visiting the court one day when the judge was not sitting, he demanded to see the legal table of fees, which by Act of Parliament, should have been hung up in the court-room. They were nowhere visible, and the judge-advocate denied any knowledge of them. Continuing his exploration into the judge's robing-room

Cochrane peered into the judge's most private apartment, which shall be nameless, and found the missing table of fees stuck up behind the door. Removing it, he re-entered the court in the act of folding it up and placing it in his pocket.

The judge-advocate, seeing what he had obtained, tried to prevent his departure, but after some argument, Cochrane was allowed to leave with his prize, which he immediately handed over to a brother officer who was going to Sicily.

The judge, furious at losing a document which would betray the corrupt practices of the court over which he presided, peremptorily demanded its return. Cochrane, quite truthfully, replied that it was not in his possession, whereupon his arrest was ordered for contempt of court. This duty devolved upon the illegally-appointed marshal-proctor, who was naturally unwilling to take the risk. So was the deputy-marshal, who, also illegally, combined with that office the function of deputy-auctioneer.

After several days' liberty, during which he was zealously shadowed, Cochrane was eventually arrested at the house of the naval commissioner by another official who had been appointed in a proper manner. When asked to accompany this person to a hotel, where he might remain on parole, he replied that he would not be a party to the illegal imprisonment of himself. If he went anywhere, he said, it must be to the town gaol. What was more, he must be carried there by force, for assuredly he would not walk.

In a room crowded with naval sympathisers the scene created considerable merriment, but finding him adamant the official sent first for a carriage, and then for a file of Maltese soldiers, who carried their large prisoner out of the room on the chair in which he was sitting, deposited him in the carriage, and drove off to prison. There he was accommodated in the best rooms that the place afforded. On being asked what he would like for dinner, however, he replied nothing. He would not pay for so much as a crust, and if he were starved to death the Admiralty court would have to answer for it. The gaoler rushed off to inform the marshal of this new development, and in about an hour returned with an order on a neighbouring hotel for the prisoner to be supplied with whatever he chose to order.

Cochrane saw his chance. He promptly ordered dinner for six, with everything of the best in the way of food and wines, and that day, and every day following, invited parties of naval officers to share his meals. The expense of these entertainments fell upon the marshal.

After a fortnight's imprisonment, during which he had cost them a pretty penny, the authorities at last made up their minds to bring him to trial.

A charge was framed with some difficulty, and after a lot of argument in court as to the legality of the proceedings, and the place where the scale of charges had been found, the judge, very puzzled as to what to do next, asked him to leave the prison on bail. This he flatly refused to do, whereupon he was remanded back into confinement.

The farce had gone on long enough, and some of his naval friends next tried to persuade him to return the table of charges and to apologise. This also he refused to do. The senior naval officer then said to him : ' Lord Cochrane, you must not remain here. The seamen are getting savage, and if you are not out soon they will pull the gaol down, which will get the naval force into a scrape. Have you any objection to escape ? '

' Not the least,' Cochrane answered. 'And it may be done, but I will neither be bailed, nor will I be set at liberty without a proper trial.'

Provided with files, he started to cut through the iron bars of his window. Three or four nights saw the work finished, and after giving a final entertainment to his friends at the expense of the court, during the course of which the gaoler, nothing loath, was made excessively intoxicated, he lowered his bedding into the street at midnight, swarmed down a rope from his third-storey window, ' and bade adieu to the merriest prison in which a seaman was ever incarcerated.' In a few minutes he was in a boat, and, catching the English packet, was soon on his way to Sicily. Thence, after retrieving his precious table of charges, he travelled on to England.

On June 6th, while making a speech in the House of Commons on the subject, he unrolled a bill of costs from the proctor of the Maltese prize-court for condemning a prize. It measured six and a quarter fathoms, or thirty-seven and a half feet, in length, and contained many curious charges. Its display created great amusement among the members. His escapades at Malta, however, were not regarded favourably. They were, to say the least of them, extremely undignified—more suited to one of Marryat's hilarious midshipmen than to a distinguished post-captain and a Knight of the Bath, who was also heir to an earldom.

It is unnecessary here to enter into the various naval abuses which Cochrane strove to rectify in the House between 1811

and 1814 ; but very soon he achieved the reputation of being somewhat troublesome. He could, when he liked, talk sound commonsense on naval topics, but too often his speeches were bitter and acrimonious, and members soon became impatient of listening to the interminable catalogue of grievances and abuses which, often at the most inopportune moments, he persisted in bringing to their notice.

13

It was in 1811 that Cochrane thought out his famous 'Secret Plans' for 'a new and most formidable method of attacking and destroying an enemy's fleet, and of performing other warlike operations on a large scale'[1] by means of smoke clouds accompanied by noxious, though not necessarily deadly, fumes. Laid before the Prince Regent, the scheme was referred to a Select Committee, one of whose members was Lord Keith. In due course the committee reported that the method of attack suggested would be irresistible.

Ordered to keep his idea a secret, lest, in the hands of some other power, they 'might have become perilous to our Colonial possessions,'[2] Cochrane, soon afterwards, was requested to visit Lord Melville, the First Lord of the Admiralty, with a view to a portion of his plan being put into operation. To this partial execution of his cherished scheme he quite naturally objected. Lord Keith, however, who seems to have been convinced that the carrying out of part of the plan would result in the destruction of the enemy ships in Genoa and the outer anchorage at Toulon, urged him to accept, pointing out that when once success had been achieved, popular clamour would put it in Cochrane's power to enforce the more deadly portions of his ideas inside the enemy's harbours.

Persuaded, he accordingly submitted a plan to Lord Melville whereby part of his idea should be put into operation against the fleet in the outer roads at Toulon, estimating that a small force of one line-of-battleship, two frigates, and four smaller vessels would be required to ensure the destruction of the French fleet. If, on the other hand, the French ships were to be captured, troops would be required as well. Compared with the cost of the blockading force maintained before Toulon, the expense would be inconsiderable. Lord Melville, however, hesitated to incur it, though, as Cochrane observes, it was more likely that 'his lordship was overruled by the ill-feeling against

[1] *Autobiography of a Seaman*, Vol. II., p. 227. [2] Ibid., Vol. II., p. 228.

me at the Admiralty, as the concurrence of the Board would have placed me in command of a squadron, with my flag flying in a line-of-battleship. This was evidently considered too high a position for one who had been for three years kept unemployed from political and personal dislike, was not to be thought of, and the project, after fruitless expectation, was dropped.'[1]

His proposal to lead a similar expedition at Flushing was negatived, while Cochrane declined to carry out a subsequent suggestion of Lord Melville's that the plan should be carried out against Toulon on a small scale, for the reason that there were few ships then in that harbour, and that 'the result of destroying these would have been badly compensated by the disclosure of the means whereby their destruction had been effected.'[2]

Submitted again to King William IV after his accession, to another committee on the occasion of a French war scare in 1846, and again during the Crimean War in 1854–55, when Cochrane, then aged eighty, volunteered to conduct them himself either against Cronstadt or Sebastopol, the plans were never used on service, though their efficacy does not seem to have been doubted. However, they remained a dead secret, and it is much to Cochrane's credit that he never divulged them, even after his dismissal from the Royal Navy, and did not make use of them when in the service of Chili, Peru, and Greece. They continued to be a mystery until the publication of the 'Panmure Papers' in 1908, where a description of them will be found in Vol. I., p. 340.

Very briefly, he proposed to mask fortifications to be attacked by means of dense clouds of smoke from burning coal and tar floated down on the positions by a favourable breeze, and to expel the garrisons by means of fumes created by burning coke with sulphur. He also contemplated floating naphtha on the water, and igniting it by means of potassium.

'There is no doubt that the fumes will envelop all the defences from the Malakoff to the Barracks,' he writes in his memorandum of August 7th, 1855, referring to a proposed attack on Sebastopol. 'The two outer batteries, on each side of the port, ought to be smoked, sulphured, and blown down by explosion-vessels, and their destruction completed by a few ships of war anchored under cover of the smoke.'

There is a distinct similarity between these suggestions and the smoke screens and gas attacks used during the Great War,

[1] *Autobiography of a Seaman*, Vol. II., p. 231. [2] Ibid., p. 232.

both ashore and afloat. Compare them, for instance, with the smoke-screens used to mask the *Vindictive* and blockships during the attack on Zeebrugge on April 23rd, 1918, the sort of hazardous operation in which Cochrane would have delighted, and which he himself might have devised and carried out had he been born a hundred years later. Indeed, he lived before his time. His ingenious mind visualised both smoke screens and chemical warfare 103 years before they were actually used in war.

It was in September 1914 that Lieutenant-General the Earl of Dundonald presented his grandfather's plans for Mr. Winston Churchill's inspection. The First Lord's nimble mind at once jumped to their possibilities, and instantly caused experiments to be made for the production of smoke by chemical means.

'We are simply pottering with this subject,' he writes on the subject of 'Smoke' on April 5th, 1915, 'which my reflections lead me to suppose is fraught with most hopeful possibilities, both as regards operations on land and especially at sea. Action must now proceed at once. . . .'[1]

Five days previously, in a communication to Lord Dundonald, Mr. Churchill had informed him that 'it was not intended for the present to proceed with the more important proposal, that is, experiments in noxious fumes,'[1] for the reason that it was not expedient to introduce elements into the war 'which might justify the enemy in having recourse to inhuman reprisals.'[1]

Exactly twenty-two days after that letter was written, on April 22nd, 1915, the Germans violated the Laws of War and launched their first poison attack at Ypres. This criminal act laid them open to severe retaliation from the Allies, who usually had the wind in their favour. It was precisely this method of war, however, that Cochrane had foreseen, and had advocated, though in not so deadly a fashion, more than a century previous.

14

In the midst of his parliamentary and other activities, Cochrane met Miss Katherine Corbett Barnes, the orphan daughter of an honourable midland family living with her guardian in Portland Place. He was staying at the time with his uncle, the Honourable Basil Cochrane, who had made a large fortune

[1] *The World Crisis, 1915*, by the Rt. Hon. W. S. Churchill, p. 84.

in the East Indies. His attachment to Miss Barnes came to the old gentleman's ears, who at once attempted to divert his nephew's attention by proposing he should marry the daughter of an Admiralty Court official, who had amassed a competence by the practices Cochrane so cordially detested.

On being informed of the match proposed for him, Cochrane refused to entertain it for a moment. To marry for money, without affection, he said, would blacken him in the eyes of his parliamentary constituents. After considerable persuasion, Miss Barnes at last consented to a runaway match, and on August 8th, 1812, the pair were married at Annan, in Scotland. Annoyed at his nephew's conduct, Uncle Basil cut him out of his will, for which loss, as Cochrane observes, 'I had a rich equivalent in the acquisition of a wife which no amount of wealth could have purchased.' We can agree. Lady Cochrane, as after events were to show, must have been a sorely-tried and anxious woman.

We come to the beginning of 1814, when, after five years of unemployment, Cochrane was nominated by his uncle, Sir Alexander Cochrane, who had recently been appointed commander-in-chief on the North America station, as his flag-captain in the *Tonnant*, line-of-battleship, then fitting out at Chatham. Sir Alexander had already sailed for his station at the end of 1813.

The war with America was still in progress, and various British vessels had suffered defeat in single ship actions. Cochrane and his uncles—Sir Alexander and the Hon. Basil—were all more or less on friendly terms with the adjutant of Lord Yarmouth's regiment, Charles Random de Berenger, a man of Prussian origin, who had attained some fame as an instructor in musketry. That de Berenger was heavily in debt and lived 'within the rules of the King's Bench,' a sort of modified imprisonment on parole now done away with, did not seem to affect his position in society. The American men-of-war usually had skilled marksmen in their tops to shoot down the exposed personnel on the decks of their adversary's ships, and it had been mooted, though not decided, that de Berenger should be embarked in the *Tonnant* to teach the men sharp-shooting. It is quite clear that Cochrane had frequently met this man at the London houses of both his uncles.

On February 5th, writing to the Admiralty from his Uncle Basil's house in Grosvenor Square, Cochrane requested their Lordships to dispense with his services on board the *Tonnant* for ten or twelve days, in order that he might have time to

complete the specification of a lamp patent. In reply, he was ordered to join at once, being told, however, that he would be granted leave if he applied again when the *Tonnant* had been moved down the river from Chatham. Joining on the 8th, he took his ship down to Long Beach, was granted a fortnight's leave, and returned again to London on the 14th. Three days later he took a house of his own in Green Street, and on Monday, February 21st, breakfasted with a Mr. Butt and the Hon. Cochrane-Johnstone at the latter's house in Cumberland Place. The meal concluded, they went towards the City in a hackney carriage.

The Hon. Cochrane-Johnstone, another uncle of Lord Cochrane's, but only eight years his senior, had adopted the name of Johnstone on his marriage. He had been in the Army and was at one time governor of Dominica, but in 1814 was heavily in debt. Being Member of Parliament for Grampound, however, he could not be arrested.

Lord Cochrane had first met Mr. Butt, then a pay clerk in Portsmouth dockyard, two years previously in connection with his political activities in the House. Butt wished Cochrane to speculate on the Stock Exchange, which the latter at first refused to do. In October 1813, however, Butt brought him £430 as the profits on a 'disinterested' speculation he had taken the liberty to make on his lordship's account, and from this time onwards Cochrane appears to have continued his financial transactions through Butt's agency. Between October 22nd, 1813, and February 10th, 1814, he made a total profit of £4,781 17*s.* 6*d.*[1]

At this period there was a curious investment on the Stock Exchange known as 'Omnium,' the composition of which varied from time to time. It was quoted at a premium which altered from day to day, and being very sensitive, was a favourite investment for those who made time bargains by buying vast quantities of stock with the intention of selling it within a few days at a profit or loss.

We were still at war with France. The Allied armies, however, were within striking distance of Paris, and Napoleon, defeated at the battle of La Rothière on February 1st, 1814, seemed at his last gasp. An immediate peace appeared certain. By the 23rd of the same month, however, gathering reinforcements and resuming the offensive, Napoleon won several victories. The price of the stocks in the London

[1] *The Guilt of Lord Cochrane in 1814*, by the Rt. Hon. Lord Ellenborough, 1914, p. 51.

market were greatly affected by this varying news. On Monday, February 7th, for instance, Omnium stood at 19⅛. Three days later, on the confirmation of the battle of La Rothière, it jumped to 23½, while on the 12th it stood at 28¾. By the 17th it was down to 25, and on the 19th rose again to 26¾.

On the 12th, according to his own affidavit, Cochrane bought £139,000 of Omnium through his broker at a premium of 28¼. The Stock Exchange sub-committee, which subsequently investigated the affair, however, remarked that 'on the afternoon of Saturday, February 19th, the three parties above mentioned may be considered as having purchased for the next settling days the following sums, viz. :

	Omnium.	*Consols.*
Lord Cochrane	£139,000	Nil
Hon. A. C. Johnstone	£410,000	£100,000
Mr. Butt	£224,000	£168,000
Total .	£773,000	£268,000

the whole of which was sold on the morning of Monday, February 21st.'[1]

At about 1 a.m. on this same day, February 21st, a person in uniform, calling himself Lieutenant-Colonel R. Du Bourg, aide-de-camp to Lord Cathcart, arrived at the Ship Inn at Dover. He said he had just arrived from France in a fishing-boat, with the most important despatches that had been brought to the country for twenty years. He required a post-chaise, and, while it was preparing, pen, ink, and paper.

A letter was written, and at three o'clock in the morning Admiral Foley, the port-admiral at Deal, was aroused from his slumbers with this missive from Du Bourg. It was to the effect that Napoleon had been killed, that the allied forces were in Paris, and that immediate peace was certain. The admiral was not satisfied that the message was genuine. Nevertheless, it would have been his duty to have 'telegraphed'[2] the gist of it through to London by means of the chain of semaphores which then existed between the naval ports and the metropolis. When daylight came, however, the weather was hazy and the

[1] *The Guilt of Lord Cochrane in 1814*, p. 59.

[2] The semaphore telegraph, clumsy though it may have been, could signal news from the coast in thirty minutes. The last station, like the wireless antennæ to-day, was on the roof of the Admiralty.

semaphore could not be used. He therefore sent Du Bourg's note to the Secretary of the Admiralty with a covering letter of his own.

Du Bourg, meanwhile, was already on his way to London in his post-chaise, for which he had offered to pay in golden napoleons. The landlord of the inn, however, not fancying French money, was paid in English one pound notes instead. The chaise first stopped at Canterbury, where the horses were changed and the post-boys given a napoleon apiece. The next stage was to Sittingbourne, while Rochester was reached at about 5.30 a.m. At Rochester, and again Dartford, Du Bourg told his news to the innkeepers, and passing on through Bexley, arrived at the Marsh Gate, near Lambeth, at about 9 a.m., where he paid off the post-boys in napoleons and drove off in a hackney carriage to 13 Green Street, Grosvenor Square, the house occupied by Lord Cochrane.

Owing to the original delay at Dover, however, other expresses bearing the tidings of victory and peace had reached London before Du Bourg. The news spread like wild-fire, and at 10 a.m., when the Stock Exchange opened, the funds naturally started to rise. Omnium soon stood at a premium of 30¼.

At noon, however, when no official confirmation of the rumour arrived, people began to be sceptical and prices fell, only to rise again when a post-chaise and four, containing three gentlemen wearing French uniforms with the white Bourbon cockades in their hats, drove through the City down Lombard Street, along Cheapside, and over Blackfriars Bridge. The horses of this equipage were decorated with laurels, and, as they passed, the occupants scattered leaflets bearing the words 'Vive le Roi! Vivent les Bourbons!' On arriving near the Marsh Gate, on the south side of the Thames, the three 'Frenchmen' left their chaise, folded up their cocked hats, and disappeared. Their progress, however, achieved the desired result. People's doubts were lulled. Omnium again rose to 32. An hour later, however, as no official confirmation of Napoleon's death had been received, the funds fell nearly to their former level.

In the meanwhile, the Omnium and other shares of Lord Cochrane, Mr. Butt, and the Hon. A. Cochrane-Johnstone had been sold, the first standing to make a profit of £2,470, the second £3,048 15*s*. and the third £4,931 5*s*. The total profits would probably have been nearer £100,000 if the telegraph between Deal and London had worked, and the

false news of Napoleon's death had thereby been given an official colouring.

A chorus of execration immediately arose against the Stock Exchange, and the Press fulminated against the 'infamous imposition' and a 'fraud of the most impudent and nefarious description.' Called upon to clear itself, the Stock Exchange promptly appointed a sub-committee to investigate the matter, and to clear its members from the suspicion of having been parties to it. On March 4th, as a result of the deliberations, a notice was posted up requesting all members of the Stock Exchange who had carried out business either directly or indirectly on February 21st for the Hon. A. Cochrane-Johnstone, Mr. R. G. Butt, Lord Cochrane, Mr. Holloway, Mr. Sandom, and Mr. M'Rae to favour the committee with an interview. At the same time a reward of £250 was offered for the discovery of 'Colonel Du Bourg.' (Holloway, it should here be said, was a wine merchant, while Sandom had also been in the wine business; but at the time was a debtor living 'within the rules of the King's Bench.' M'Rae was nothing more nor less than an impecunious adventurer.)

On March 7th the sub-committee issued its full report with the evidence attached. It described the arrival of Colonel Du Bourg at Dover and his subsequent progress to London and arrival at Cochrane's house in Green Street. It then went on to mention the arrival of the make-believe French officers in the City, one of whom was identified as the man Sandom. It continued by giving a full account of the financial transactions on the Stock Exchange of Lord Cochrane, Hon. A. Cochrane-Johnstone, and Mr. Butt.

Though no specific charges were formulated against them, the statement, coupled with the facts that Du Bourg had ended his journey at Cochrane's house, and that some of the bank-notes paid out by him had been in Mr. Butt's possession less than forty-eight hours before, was sufficient to show where suspicion lay.

Cochrane himself had remained in London until February 28th, completing his lamp patent, but on that day went to Chatham and rejoined his ship. On March 8th or 9th, hearing of the committee's report, he returned to London, and on the 11th prepared an affidavit in which he strenuously protested his innocence, but admitted that De Berenger, attired in military uniform, had certainly visited his house in Green Street on the morning of February 21st, where he had been given a hat and a cloak instead of the uniform cap and overcoat he was wearing.

De Berenger and 'Lieutenant-Colonel Du Bourg,' indeed, were one and the same person.

On about March 14th, the Admiralty wrote to Cochrane stating that they had read the report of the Stock Exchange sub-committee, together with his published affidavit, and had come to the conclusion that some further explanation was due from him. At the same time, an acting-captain was appointed to relieve him in the *Tonnant*.

Replying on March 15th, Cochrane asked the Admiralty to inform him upon what points they required further elucidation. To this, two days later, he received an answer that no detailed examination or discussion of the several points was necessary as the case 'was become the subject of judicial or other investigation.'

In a furious rejoinder of March 22nd, Cochrane practically accused the Board of giving judgment on *ex parte* evidence and of superseding him in command of the *Tonnant* through listening to declarations made in pot-houses and such-like places by people not upon oath. The Admiralty replied, and justly, by saying that they had treated him 'with all possible attention and delicacy,' and had granted him leave of absence from his ship on the application of a near relative, in order that he might come to London to take such steps as he thought fit to clear his name of the aspersions brought against him by the Stock Exchange committee's report.

Cochrane, indeed, realising that affairs were taking a very serious turn, seems to have convinced himself that the Admiralty were using their influence to encompass his downfall in retaliation for his parliamentary crusade against naval abuses, and his uncompromising attitude in the case of Lord Gambier. His suspicions, if they really were suspicions and not merely the cause for a further grievance against a body with whom he had long been in conflict, appear to have been utterly unfounded. No Board of Admiralty would go out of its way to ensure the condemnation of an officer who, though litigious, refractory, and insubordinate, was also a very gallant seaman and fighter.

We need not pursue this unsavoury business at any great length ; but on March 23rd, the uniform worn by De Berenger when masquerading as 'Colonel Du Bourg' was accidentally recovered from the bottom of the Thames by a waterman. And on April 8th De Berenger himself was arrested at Leith while attempting to leave the country. In his possession were found letters, papers, and French napoleons, together with a

number of bank-notes known to have been in the hands of Mr. Cochrane-Johnstone and Mr. Butt between February 24th and 27th.

'On April 27th an indictment for conspiracy was preferred before the Grand Jury for the City of London, at the Sessions House in the Old Bailey, against De Berenger, Lord Cochrane, Cochrane-Johnstone, Butt, Sandom, M'Rae, Holloway, and Lyte. A true bill was found on the same day. . . .'[1] Holloway, Sandom, M'Rae, and Lyte were all implicated in the episode of the French officers driving through the City in the post-chaise, the three latter having actually dressed themselves up for the occasion.

It is unnecessary here to describe the trial which began on June 8th and terminated the next day with the sentence, so far as the subject of this memoir is concerned, of twelve months imprisonment in the King's Bench, one hour's confinement in the pillory opposite the Royal Exchange, and a fine of £1,000. Both the trial and the sentence, and the after events up till July 3rd, 1815, the date of Cochrane's final release from prison, have already been briefly referred to in the opening of this narrative.

Neither is it my business to argue the much debated and much written question of his innocence or guilt. Indeed, I should prefer to obliterate this chapter of his eventful life altogether from his biography could such a course be taken without detriment to the general narrative.

It must be admitted, however, that after carefully reading the two volumes already referred to—*Lord Cochrane's Trial before Lord Ellenborough* and *The Guilt of Lord Cochrane in 1814* —the evidence, to a lay mind, reads very strongly against him. On the other hand, both these books were written for the avowed object of refuting the accusations of partiality levied against Lord Chief Justice Ellenborough—in other words, to prove that Lord Cochrane was guilty and that he deserved his sentence.

Cochrane's own conduct of the case, moreover, was amazingly casual, and his attitude was not unlike that of an innocent man. He never even read his brief, and, after the trial, quarrelled violently with his solicitors.

How far he was aware of the elaborate arrangements for the hoax on the Stock Exchange, how much he acquiesced

[1] *Lord Cochrane's Trial before Lord Ellenborough*, by J. B. Atlay, M.A., to which, with *The Guilt of Lord Cochrane in 1814*, by Lord Ellenborough (1914), I am indebted for most of the details of the Stock Exchange fraud here mentioned.

in the scheme which undoubtedly originated in the minds of his uncle, the Hon. A. Cochrane-Johnstone, and Mr. Butt, must ever remain a mystery. It is impossible to say whether the wicked uncle found his nephew a willing tool, or whether the nephew was forced into a false position more or less against his will. The guilt of Cochrane-Johnstone and Butt, however, was amply made manifest during the trial. The guilt of Cochrane, which largely hinged upon De Berenger's visit to his house and the colour of his uniform, was by no means so clear. What is more, Cochrane-Johnstone fled the country before the sentence was pronounced and left his nephew to bear the brunt.

There are two sides to every question, and in 1926 the Earl of Birkenhead published a book entitled *Famous Trials of History*, in which, in eleven pages, he deals succinctly with the case. It is to be presumed that so eminent an authority as the earl would not describe a trial of such consequence without first weighing the evidence on both sides and consulting all the available authorities, and his essay on the subject concludes with the following words, which I quote by permission :

'Was he guilty? I cannot—I do not—believe he was. His whole life negatives the suspicion, but for suspicion there was ground. If not he, yet his uncle and associates, did plan and carry out a nefarious plot. It was inevitable that his conduct should be scrutinised. It is not a matter of surprise if a jury, faced with convincing evidence of a plot, some of which pointed to Cochrane, should have yielded to a common failing of all juries who are apt to condemn without distinguishing between those charged with an offence when that offence has been committed.'

15

Released from prison on July 3rd, 1815, Cochrane at once resumed his activities in the House of Commons. Two days later he gave notice of his intention, in the course of the next session, to move for an inquiry into the conduct of Lord Chief Justice Ellenborough during the trial. The document, which contained thirteen charges and occupied no less than sixty pages, was read to an audience of three members on March 5th, 1816. It took some hours to read.

A fourteenth charge, containing accusations against another judge, was brought forward on March 29th, but was ruled out of order, and on April 30th, Cochrane moved for the consideration

of the whole. Even those members who believed in his innocence declined to associate themselves with the measure, and the House divided, eighty-nine votes to nil. Cochrane and Sir Francis Burdett, his friend and Westminster colleague who had seconded the resolution, found themselves utterly unsupported. It was a travesty of an impeachment.

From now on, full of bitterness and anger, Cochrane did his utmost to inconvenience the government during the period of distress and reconstruction that followed after the war. It is unnecessary here to follow this portion of his parliamentary career, but he was for ever presenting petitions and making speeches vilifying Ministers, while denouncing the House as the fount of everything that was dishonourable and iniquitous. His campaign, which he afterwards admitted to have been a grave error, was coloured by his personal animosities. It did nothing to enhance his popularity. On the contrary, it did much to alienate the sympathy of those who regarded him an innocent man.

By 1817 his financial affairs were in a very bad way. The large sums made in prize-money seem to have been frittered away in one fashion or another, and besides the bill of £1,200 for the Honiton election, the expenses of his trial had been considerable.

At this period, nearly all the Spanish colonies in South America were in open rebellion, and Chili had started a small navy of her own, which had already achieved some success against the Spaniards in the Pacific. And in April 1817, a Chilian agent, Don José Alvarez, arrived in London for the purpose of raising money and enlisting sympathy for the cause of Chilian independence. Approaching Cochrane, he pressed him to take command of the Chilian fleet, offering him £5,000 a year and other advantages, together with the rank of admiral and commander-in-chief. In spite of the recently enacted 'Foreign Enlistment Act,' which forbade British subjects to take any active part in the wars of foreign countries, Cochrane gladly accepted.

The chance, indeed, was too good to be missed. Cut off from his own navy, he would, in Chili, find himself in a position of great power. The pay was good, and there was ample opportunity of the sort of irregular fighting that he loved. Moreover, there was always the chance of making large sums in prize-money, and to Cochrane, as to other naval officer of the period, prize-money was one of the greatest incentives in the world.

He made his farewell speech in the House of Commons in June 1818, and on August 15th, having realised his English property, sailed for South America. Arriving at Valparaiso with Lady Cochrane and her children on November 28th, he found the city in a state of excited jubilation because of a recent successful coup of the Chilian Admiral Blanco Encelada, who had returned three weeks previously after capturing a fine Spanish frigate and several merchant ships.

Thus, about a fortnight before his forty-third birthday, Cochrane found himself admiralissimo of a tiny alien fleet of seven vessels—three frigates and four small sloops. His flag flew in the captured Spanish 50-gun frigate, now renamed the *O'Higgins*, but, in general, his ships were ill-found and badly equipped. The crews consisted for the greater part of raw Chilian peasants hastily converted into seamen—these and some 170 British officers and men, who had enrolled themselves under a foreign flag in the hope of excitement and prize-money.

The history of Cochrane's four years' service under the Chilian flag is related in a book called *Narrative of Services in Chili and Peru*, written by his amanuensis, Earp, and published in 1859, chiefly for the purpose of supporting certain pecuniary claims. One-sided and by no means accurate, it attacks most of the Chilian high officials with whom he had dealings, but in particular Don José Ignatio Zenteno, the Minister of Marine, and General San Martin. In 1822, indeed, the latter published a pamphlet at Lima called *Acusaciones contra Lord Cochrane*, to which Cochrane thought fit to reply by a *Vindicacion*.

In 1861, moreover, after the appearance of the *Narrative of Services*, Ignatio Zenteno, the son of the former Minister of Marine, published a pamphlet reproducing contemporary letters and documents, which refuted many of the statements in Cochrane's more pretentious book. 'Cochrane would never have written in the tone that he did,' said Zenteno, 'if he had remembered that Chili possessed archives, which were the monuments of his avarice, and of the honourable conduct of those whom he made his enemies. . . . In Lord Cochrane's account of his relations with the Government of Chili, there is not a single page that does not contain a calumny, an involuntary error, or '*una necedad*.'[1]

So the *Narrative of Services in Chili and Peru*, like portions of the *Autobiography*, must be accepted with caution. It is only charitable to think that when they were written, in 1859, the

[1] *The Guilt of Lord Cochrane in 1814*, p. 202.

Earl of Dundonald, as he was then, had forgotten much of what had taken place some forty years before. This does not mean, however, that San Martin's *Acusaciones*, or Zenteno's pamphlet, are wholly fair or unbiased. On the contrary, Cochrane had many difficulties to contend with, and his chief difficulty of all was to obtain the pay and prize-money rightly due to the officers and men of his fleet.

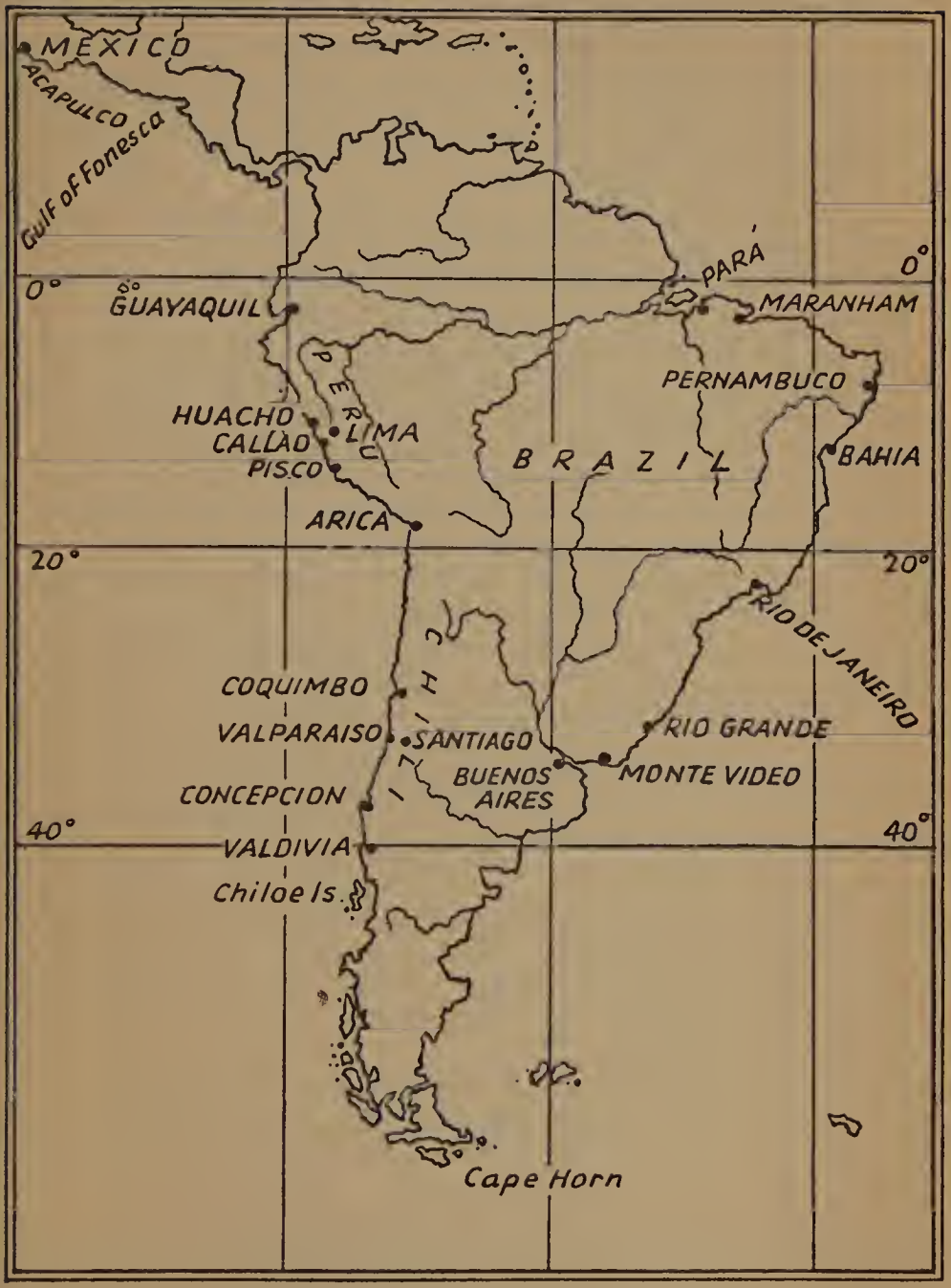
From the very first the new admiral's relations with Captains Guise and Spry, two Englishmen in the Chilian naval service, were anything but cordial. But while Cochrane accused them of fomenting mischief and disloyalty to himself in the fleet, Zenteno stated that they were the only foreigners who did not take part in Cochrane's intrigues.

The Chilians had already secured the command of the sea off their own coasts, and at the time of Cochrane's arrival in the country it was Zenteno's policy to expel the Spanish completely from Peru. An attack upon Callao, where the bulk of the enemy fleet lay concentrated under the guns of the forts, was the first necessary operation, and on January 16th, 1819, the new admiral sailed from Valparaiso with this end in view with three frigates and a sloop.

On the way north a mutiny broke out in the sloop, which necessitated a stoppage at Coquimbo for the punishment of the offenders. Arriving before Callao, however, Cochrane attempted a surprise attack upon the Spanish fleet, which consisted of three frigates, a corvette, some heavily armed merchantmen, and a number of small craft. It was his idea to take in two of his ships under American colours, to hoist out his boats, and to cut out the enemy frigates. The plan was spoilt by a thick fog, and after a couple of hours' ineffectual bombardment of the batteries the *O'Higgins* was forced to withdraw.

Cochrane's eldest son, then aged five, was actually on board his father's flagship during the engagement, having accidentally embarked at Valparaiso. Escaping from his cabin, the small boy appeared on deck when the firing started, and employed himself by passing powder to the gun's crews.

Foiled in his first essay, Cochrane withdrew his fleet to an anchorage about three miles from the forts and prepared an explosion-vessel. On March 22nd this ship was sent down upon the Spaniards, who, in the meanwhile, had prepared for the attack by dismantling their ships and constructing a boom. The result was another fiasco, for the explosion-vessel was sunk by enemy gunfire before reaching the fleet.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RIO DE JANEIRO
CHILI
COQUIMBO
VALPARAISO
SANTIAGO
RIO GRANDE
BUENOS AIRES
MONTE VIDEO
CONCEPCION
40°
VALDIVIA
Chiloe Is.
Cape Horn

Cruising off the Peruvian coast for another three months, he raided the coasting towns and captured several ships. At Patavilca 70,000 dollars were taken by a landing party, while at Guambucho 60,000 dollars were captured in a French vessel, and two other craft were taken. Men were also landed at Huacho, Pisco, Paita, but at the latter place did harm to the Chilian cause by getting out of hand and looting churches and private dwelling houses.

Returning to Valparaiso on June 16th, disappointed at not having destroyed the Spanish fleet, Cochrane persuaded the Chilian government that a rocket attack offered the best chances of success. Arriving at Callao again on September 29th, the attack was delivered on the night of October 2nd. It was a complete failure, owing, as he says, to the Chilian government having employed Spanish prisoners to fill the rockets. Knowing they were for use against their countrymen they naturally mingled the powder with sand and other incombustibles. Another attack on October 5th with an explosion-vessel was no more successful.

Short of supplies, he next descended upon Pisco and helped himself to what he required, though the landing party was badly cut up in the process. At Guayaquil he captured two small Spanish vessels-of-war, but again, taken as a whole, the expedition had not been a success. His squadron was in a state of barely-suppressed mutiny. Discipline, indeed, was bad, and the results of the cruise were not likely to commend themselves to the Chilian government, which expected far greater things.

Parting company from the rest of the fleet in his flagship, he made up his mind to try to capture Valdivia, the most powerful Spanish port in Chili, which had always been considered as impregnable. On his way south he captured a brig carrying 20,000 dollars, and on January 18th, 1820, the *O'Higgins* appeared alone before the port, flying Spanish colours and signalling for a pilot.

Mistaken for a genuine Spaniard, the ship was boarded by a visiting party of one officer and four men, who were promptly clapped below. Forty-eight hours were spent in reconnoitring the forts and examining the channels, when, after capturing a Spanish man-of-war brig without firing a shot, Cochrane took the *O'Higgins* north to Concepcion, where he obtained 250 soldiers to assist in his contemplated attack on Valdivia.

The flagship, at this time, carried no more than two executive officers besides the admiral, and one of them was under arrest

and the other utterly incapable. Cochrane himself had to perform all the duties on deck, but on the night of January 26th, while the ship lay becalmed, he incautiously turned the watch over to the lieutenant and retired to his cabin to sleep. The lieutenant, with nobody's eyes upon him, went below to his cabin and turned in, leaving the ship in charge of a midshipman. The midshipman, seeing nothing to worry about, stretched himself out on deck and relapsed into the profound slumber of youth.

The calm gave way to a gentle breeze which soon became constant. The blocks aloft creaked and the sails filled, and the ship, heeling over to the wind, rising and falling gently on the long swell, started to ripple through the water. But the midshipman heeded it not. Nobody heeded it. For some time she moved on, then the jarring, thudding crash as she drove on to a sharp fanged rock far below the waterline, where she hung, beating heavily in the swell, likely to become a total wreck if the wind freshened. The midshipman woke up. In an instant all was flurry and confusion ; men shouting and crying and running to and fro in bewildered panic, thinking their last hour had come, some hastening to get out the boats, others invoking all the saints in their calendar. It was only with the greatest difficulty that Cochrane, coming on deck, prevented them, with their officers, from hoisting out the boats and deserting the ship.

The pumps were out of order, and the carpenter, as incompetent as most of his shipmates, was unable to repair them. Putting the frightened men to the task of baling out the ship with buckets, the admiral himself set to work on the faulty pumps. By midnight they were actually sucking and keeping down the inflow of water.

Preparations were then made to heave the ship off into deep water, though the officers, with one accord, protested that this should not be done until the full extent of the damage had been discovered. Cochrane silenced their clamour. If the leak could be kept under by the pumps the ship could be taken as far as Valdivia, and that, for the moment, was all he had in mind.

After much laying out of anchors, and pulling and hauling, the *O'Higgins* slid free and proceeded on her way, though the water invading the magazine had drowned nearly all the powder and rendered it useless. This in itself would have daunted many a weaker man, but Cochrane did not hesitate. The lack of unlimited ammunition would force his handful of troops

to use their bayonets, and cold steel was precisely what the Spaniards most cordially detested.

On nearing Valdivia the troops and marines from the flagship were disembarked into two smaller vessels which had accompanied her. The *O'Higgins* then sailed off out of sight of the coast, lest the suspicions of the enemy should be aroused, while the two little transports, with Cochrane in command, proceeded towards the city with Spanish colours flying.

The harbour of Valdivia is a deep indentation in the coast, no more than 1,300 yards wide. It was defended at the time by fifteen forts mounting 118 guns, but on the afternoon of February 3rd, giving out that they were Spanish vessels from Cadiz, the two transports came to an anchor off the only available landing place, to find that the swell was too heavy for disembarking the troops.

Concealing his soldiers below, Cochrane hoisted out his boats in readiness and kept them out of sight behind the ships. In spite of the friendly colours, however, the Spaniards ashore had not been taken in. Becoming suspicious, they marched one body of troops down to the landing place, and stationed another reinforcement of 350 men close at hand. At this juncture one of the ship's boats drifted astern into full view of the enemy and made further deception impossible. The nearest fort immediately opened fire, killing two men on board one of the transports.

There was nothing to be done but to disembark the troops immediately, surf or no surf. The men were hurried into the waiting boats, and a launch containing forty-four men, led by Major Miller, a gallant British officer who had served in the Peninsula and had already been badly wounded during the attack on Pisco, pulled ashore under heavy fire. They effected a landing and routed the defending Spaniards at the point of the bayonet, and by five o'clock in the afternoon 300 men had safely been got ashore. So far so good.

The next task was to capture the forts, the first of which, Fort Ingles, was approached by a path slippery with spray, and so narrow that it could only be used by men in single file. Cochrane waited for darkness, when, amidst the thundering roar of the surf, a small body of picked men marched on to the flank. The main attacking body, meanwhile, advanced from another direction, shouting and firing their muskets. The Spaniards opened a heavy fire in the direction of the noise and prepared to repel an attack, while the flanking party meanwhile crept unobserved into the fort at the side and

poured a sudden volley into the garrison. The Spaniards fled headlong, to run full-tilt into a reinforcement of 300 men coming to their help, who broke and fled likewise.

The other forts opened their gates to receive the runaways. The Chilians, however, were so close on their heels that they also entered with the enemy, and, before very long, three of the five principal forts on the western shore of the harbour had definitely been taken. A fourth, defended by 200 men with two guns, was also captured, and, by daylight, Cochrane was in possession of all the western defences. The Spaniards had lost over 100 killed, while the same number had been made prisoners. The Chilian casualties were no more than seven killed and nineteen wounded.

The next day the two transports, followed by the *O'Higgins*, sailed up the narrow inlet, whereupon the Spanish garrisons in the eastern defences and on the islands in the harbour sought safety in flight. One of the transports unfortunately ran ashore and became a total loss, while the flagship, barely afloat, had to be grounded on a mud bank to prevent her sinking in deep water. On February 5th, however, Cochrane, nothing daunted, went on up the river in his last remaining ship, to find that the town of Valdivia was deserted by the enemy. The forts were garrisoned with the Chilian troops, and the inhabitants, whose sympathies were largely Chilian, were directed to elect themselves a governor under the Republic of Chili. Thus, with a handful of men and his own superb audacity, he had captured the most important Spanish military depot in the south. It contained vast quantities of ammunition and stores of all kinds, which, with a small man-of-war, all passed into his hands.

His attempt to take the outlying island of Chiloe on February 6th ended in failure. On returning to Valparaiso on the 27th, however, he found himself a popular hero, and was warmly thanked by Zenteno, the Minister of Marine, and President O'Higgins, the two last named writing to the senate, requesting it to grant Cochrane one of the recently confiscated estates as a reward for his services. In his *Narrative of Services*, however, Cochrane says that Zenteno was furious at the capture of Valdivia, and that he, Cochrane, deserved 'to lose his head for daring to attack such a place without instructions.' There is nothing to justify this statement. Zenteno thanked him, and warmly, and if Cochrane's estate was taken from him some years later by another government, it was largely because he had chosen to mix himself up in

internal politics which, as admiralissimo, had little or nothing to do with him.

His quarrel with Zenteno really arose over the question of money. The fleet had not been paid, while prize-money was apparently withheld. The seamen, naturally enough, were in a state of mutiny, particularly the British. That there was no money in the treasury to meet their demands mattered little to them.

Ever since the war had started the Chilians had wished to send an army to Peru for the purpose of capturing Lima, to encourage the insurrectionary movement in the interior, and to expel the Spaniards altogether. If this were effected, Peru could no longer be used as a base for operations against Chili, and the Chilian seaborne trade would be safe. Cochrane thought otherwise. He wished, in the first instance, to be made commander-in-chief of all the land and sea forces, and to have the fate of Peru left entirely in his hands. Zenteno, on the other hand, insisted that he should command the fleet only, and should take his orders from San Martin, who, with O'Higgins, had largely been instrumental in freeing Chili from the Spanish yoke.

Time and again, his personal ambition foiled, Cochrane threatened to resign, and on April 23rd, 1820, Zenteno plainly told him that it would not be difficult to find his successor. Indeed, he mentioned the name of Captain Guise, who, with the other Englishman, Captain Spry, had long been Cochrane's *bête noir*. The fleet at this time, indeed, was divided and agitated into two opposing factions, one favouring Cochrane and the other Guise.

Money was at the root of all these difficulties, and the fact is clearly shown in a letter written by Cochrane on July 31st, 1819. If the government could not afford to pay the fleet for its services at the same rates as obtained in England and other countries, he said, he should be supplied with 800 soldiers. With their help he would then be able to levy contributions in Peru, with the triple object of benefiting the Chilian seamen, refitting the ships, and using what remained for other purposes.

But there had already been enough of this sacking and looting of towns, and if Cochrane's idea had been carried out the Peruvians would have detested the Chilians even worse than the Spanish. The younger Zenteno, in his pamphlet, refers to the scheme as ' Una pirateria al abrigo del papellon Chileno,' or piracy under the Chilian flag, which indeed it was.

Finally after much disagreement and wrangling the wages of the seamen were paid until July 16th, 1820, Cochrane receiving an assurance that his own share of the prize-money, 67,000 dollars, would be handed over to him as soon as possible.

Without a doubt there was much to be said for Cochrane's attitude. No admiral in the world can command a fleet if the men are in a state of mutiny through the non-payment of their wages. Nor can he conduct operations if his ships are ill-found and inefficient.

But at last, swallowing his pride and impatience, the pugnacious Scotsman, who by this time had come to be known to the Spaniards as ' El Diablo,' was persuaded to work under General San Martin's orders.

16

On August 21st the squadron left Valparaiso with General San Martin and 4,000 troops to expel the Spaniards from Peru. Very soon there was a clash of opinion between Cochrane and the general, the former wishing to land the army near Callao for the purpose of marching on Lima. San Martin, however, insisted upon landing his troops at Pisco, where he remained inactive until the end of October. He then re-embarked and proceeded to Ancon, leaving Cochrane and three ships to keep watch on the Spanish squadron at Callao.

Freed from the trammels of superior authority, Cochrane was once more in his element. Inside the harbour at Callao was the Spanish frigate *Esmeralda*, together with another vessel, said to be carrying a million dollars. The Spaniards, expecting attack, had augmented their shore batteries and manned their ships with picked men, and had also organised a defence flotilla of twenty-seven gunboats, and constructed a strong boom.

At anchor in the harbour lay the British sloop *Hyperion* and the American frigate *Macedonian*. In the event of an attack, these vessels were to hoist special lights to avoid being fired upon by the forts, and from the American, Cochrane had discovered what these lights were to be.

For three days he quietly made his preparations without divulging his plan, and then, on November 5th, issued an order to his squadron stating that an attack would take place the same night. He would lead it himself, and, as he told his men, ' the value of all the vessels captured in Callao will

be yours.' Calling for volunteers, every officer and man came forward. One hundred and sixty seamen and eighty marines were chosen, and at sunset the two smaller ships were sent out to sea as if in chase, leaving the *O'Higgins* alone in sight of the shore.

The boats of all three ships, fourteen in all, were alongside the offside of the flagship. The expedition embarked after dark, each man armed with his cutlass and pistol, and wearing white clothing with a blue band round one arm for identification. No detail had been forgotten. Once on board the *Esmeralda* the Chilians had been cautioned to shout not 'Viva la patria,' their national battle-cry, but 'Viva el Rey,' the battle-cry of their enemies.

At 10 p.m. the flotilla, in three groups, led by Cochrane himself, left the *O'Higgins* under muffled oars and pulled silently towards the enemy through the blackness of the night. At midnight they reached the boom, where Cochrane's boat, still leading the way, sighted a guard-boat on watch. A pistol at the Spanish officer's head ensured his silence, and, passing through the opening, the boats were soon alongside the *Esmeralda*, which lay just beyond.

She was boarded simultaneously at several different points, the attack being so much a surprise that all the Spanish crew, except the two sentries on deck, appear to have been asleep below. One of these men was shot by Cochrane as he clambered up over the ship's side. The other, clubbing his musket, knocked the admiral backwards, where, falling into the boat, a thole-pin entered his back close to his spine and caused an ugly wound. Springing up again, he was shot through the thigh just as he reached the enemy's deck, but, binding up the wound, continued to fight. In a few moments the Chilians were in possession of the after part of the ship, and after a short stand in the forecastle the Spaniards either sought safety in the hold or jumped overboard. Within a quarter of an hour of Cochrane first leaping on board, the *Esmeralda* was his.

The batteries ashore, meanwhile, opened fire, whereupon the captured *Esmeralda* hoisted the same lights as the *Hyperion* and *Macedonian*. For some time the puzzled gunners fired impartially upon all three ships, but then concentrated upon the British and American vessels, forcing them to cut their cables and to run for safety.

Cochrane, incapacitated by his wounds, now had to hand over the command to Guise, and, once in possession of the ship, the boarding party lost all sense of discipline, the Chilians

plundering the officers' cabins, and the British breaking into the spirit-room and helping themselves. Realising he would never be able to induce his unruly crew to man the boats again for the capture of the other vessels, which included the treasure ship, Guise was forced to give orders for the *Esmeralda's* cables to be cut and sail to be made. She was safely taken out of harbour with a loss to the Chilians of eleven killed and thirty wounded, the enemy's casualties amounting to 160 killed and wounded.

The cutting out of the *Esmeralda* was one of the most daring of Cochrane's many deeds, certainly one of the neatest things he ever did, and, according to some accounts, one of the principal reasons for his reinstatement in the British Navy twelve years afterwards. It was altogether a gallant piece of work for 240 men in boats to capture a powerful frigate manned by a crew of nearly 400, protected by a boom and a flotilla of gunboats, and to carry her safely out to sea from under the guns of many batteries commanding the anchorage, with the Spanish admiral and 200 of his men on board as prisoners.

The capture of the enemy's flagship rang the death-knell of the Spanish naval predominance in the Pacific.

It is unnecessary to describe the admiral's furious quarrels with San Martin on the subject of the pay and prize-money due to the fleet and to himself; Cochrane's forcible seizure of plate and money on board a ship at Ancon; the virtual accusations of robbery levied against him by San Martin, and his replies. He eventually returned to Valparaiso in June, 1822, a soured and embittered man, and later in the same year attempted to impeach San Martin.

The step was ill-advised and foolish, almost as foolish as his opposition to the vote of thanks to Lord Gambier. The Chilians would have none of it, and on January 18th, 1823, having in the meanwhile received an offer to take command of the Brazilian fleet and to free that country from the Portuguese, he sailed for Rio de Janeiro.

He was a disappointed man. His money demands remained unsatisfied until, in 1845, the Chilian government granted him the sum of £6,000, and, twelve years later, gave him the full pay of his rank for the remainder of his life. It was a tithe of what he considered himself entitled to.

The name *Esmeralda*, however, will probably always be commemorated in the Chilian navy list, as will also the names of *San Martin*, *O'Higgins*, *Zenteno*, and *Almirante Cochrane*.

17

Brazil had been a Portuguese colony since the sixteenth century. Like many another country, she felt the effects of the French Revolution, and, late in 1807, when the French armies overran Portugal, the Portuguese royal family left their home country and migrated to South America. Brazil then became the new headquarters, as it were, of the Portuguese empire.

The country had become a kingdom in 1815, but from 1808 until 1821 there was a continual succession of revolts and insurrections, one section of the inhabitants favouring complete independence, and the other desiring to remain an appanage of Portugal. The situation came to a head in 1821, when the king returned to Portugal, leaving his son, Pedro, to act as regent in Brazil. In 1822, after various quarrels with the mother country, the native Brazilians declared their independence and nominated Pedro their emperor. The southern provinces soon declared their allegiance to the new ruler, but in the north, the provinces from Bahia to Para, including Maranham—or Maranhão—were garrisoned by troops who still remained loyal to Portugal.

At the time of Cochrane's arrival at Rio de Janeiro on March 13th, 1823, the Brazilian Navy consisted of one 64-gun ship, the *Pedro Primeiro*, the frigate *Piranza*, and six smaller vessels. Some of his officers followed him from Chili, and a few more Europeans had joined the fleet in Brazil. The greater number of the seamen, however, consisted of the lowest class of Portuguese—badly paid, ill-disciplined, discontented, and utterly useless as sailors. Before doing anything else, he was forced to offer bounties to British and other European sailors from merchant-ships, to induce them to join to impart some sort of seamanlike efficiency in his tatterdemalion ships' companies.

The Portuguese fleet, which was at Bahia, consisted of one 74-gun ship of the line, ten frigates or corvettes, a brig, and a schooner—in all thirteen ships, a force considerably superior to Cochrane's. It was necessary, however, for the new Brazilian state to secure the command of the sea to prevent the arrival of reinforcements from Portugal, and after the usual discussions and arguments with the Brazilian Minister of Marine as to his pay and perquisites, Cochrane, during April, sailed north with his best vessels to blockade Bahia.

On May 4th the Portuguese fleet came sailing out of the

river. In spite of his inferiority Cochrane advanced to the attack, but, after some manœuvring and desultory firing, the engagement had to be broken off without result. The Brazilian fleet, in short, was utterly useless. The admiral's signals were disobeyed, most of the seamen inefficient and mutinous. Three of the ships were bad sailers. Guns were wrongly fitted, and fuses and powder unserviceable. The sails were so worn and rotten as to split into streamers in anything more than the gentlest of breezes.

Concentrating the best of the officers and men on board the *Pedro Primeiro*, he took the rest of his squadron to a convenient anchorage, leaving them there to equip some captured coasters as fireships, and then continuing to cruise off Bahia with his flagship and one other vessel. The Portuguese fleet, meanwhile, remained timorous and inactive, and very soon the rigours of the blockade caused great scarcity of food in the city. The news that fireships were being prepared did nothing to allay the fears of the enemy.

On June 12th, in pitch darkness, Cochrane sailed nine miles up the river in the *Pedro Primeiro* to the spot where the Portuguese fleet lay at anchor. Their admiral, we are told, was attending a ball ashore when he heard that 'El Diablo's' flagship was in the midst of his fleet. What might have happened we can only guess, but the wind failed and the tide turned, and Cochrane was forced to drop down the river without effecting anything.

The reconnaissance, however, had its effect upon the Portuguese admiral, and on July 1st, after a scare that the fireships were ready, he embarked all the garrison in their transports, while those civilians who could afford it hurried on board the merchantmen. The next day the enemy fleet of thirteen men-of-war and upwards of seventy transports and merchant craft dropped down the river and put out to sea. Cochrane, with his two vessels, forbore to attack them as they passed. Presently, however, when the whole great armada was clear of the estuary, the two Brazilian men-of-war sailed in among the sternmost Portuguese and ordered them, one after the other, to heave to. It was not intended to weaken the Brazilian crews by detaching parties to sail the prizes back to harbour. Each vessel, when boarded, had her main and mizzen-masts cut away, her arms thrown overboard, and her water-casks stove in until only sufficient water remained for the voyage back to Bahia. There, on pain of something infinitely more serious, ship after ship was forced to return.

The work went on all through the day and night of July 2nd, and on the 3rd, Cochrane having been joined by three other vessels, transport after transport, merchant ship after merchant ship, was crippled and forced to return. By July 4th the *Pedro Primeiro* had left her consorts far astern and was hard on the heels of the Portuguese men-of-war, who turned to attack. They fired a few harmless broadsides which the *Pedro* had little difficulty in evading, and this was the nearest approach to actual fighting which took place during the whole war.

On July 5th a number of passenger ships were crippled and sent back to Bahia, and the same evening Cochrane saw six large vessels detach themselves from the main body of the enemy. Sailing after them in pursuit, he came up with them next morning, to discover they contained several thousand soldiers intended as a reinforcement for the province of Maranham. They also were turned back to Bahia.

The chase continued for days, and by July 11th the Portuguese fleet and the pursuing Brazilians had both reached the latitude of the Equator, where it fell flat calm. Three days later, however, the wind rose and the chase continued, while on the 16th, seizing his opportunity, Cochrane fastened on to a Portuguese frigate and poured in a broadside. At this most inopportune moment the mainsail of the *Pedro Primeiro* split and she was forced to drop astern.

The chase had lasted for fourteen days, having started in latitude 13° south and ended in latitude 5° north. Of the seventy transports and merchant vessels that had sailed from Bahia, over fifty had been turned back, while the Portuguese fleet, hopelessly demoralised, did nothing to prevent these wholesale captures. One Brazilian vessel, commanded by Captain Taylor, an Englishman, pursued the enemy all the way home to the Tagus, where, with cool effrontery, he calmly burnt four vessels under the guns of a line-of-battleship.

After giving up the chase Cochrane turned south-westward for Maranham, in the hope of securing that province for Brazil. He had no troops with which to occupy it, no ship except his own flagship, but, on his arrival on July 26th, calmly sent a letter to the Portuguese governor, informing him that he had a fleet and army close on his heels, and advising him to surrender. His strategem, which was emphasised by the *Pedro Primeiro* sailing up the river on the 27th and anchoring off the town—the first line-of-battleship that had ever done so—had the desired effect.

The governor did surrender, and on July 28th the province declared its allegiance to Brazil and arrangements were made for the election of a provisional government. The Portuguese troops, not without difficulty, were embarked on board transports, and on August 20th sailed for home.

Cochrane, meanwhile, occupied himself with the civil administration of the newly-acquired province. The provisional government soon proved itself to be anything but satisfactory from his point of view. It claimed all the property taken from the Portuguese, regardless of the fact that an Imperial decree assigned all captures to the actual captors. Determined to have his way, the admiral embarked all property that could be moved on board a couple of his prizes, and sent it down to Rio de Janeiro for condemnation. Not content with this, he demanded from the local government a full list of all the military stores and money lately in the hands of the Portuguese government, which, in accordance with the decree, also belonged to the fleet. No less than 120 vessels had been taken. Some of them had valuable cargoes, while there was a large quantity of merchandise in the customs houses.

After various disturbances, and the supersession of various successive Juntas as unsatisfactory, he sailed for Rio de Janeiro on November 9th. On his arrival he was welcomed by the Emperor in person, created Marquis of Maranham and granted an estate, and was awarded the Imperial Order of the Cruzeiro together with the thanks of the nation.

His honours were well deserved. In seven months he had freed the northern provinces from Portuguese rule, had taken a large number of ships and a vast quantity of money and stores, had dissipated the Portuguese army of occupation, and had driven their fleet hastily back to Europe. All this had been done without the loss of a man or a ship. It is true that the enemy had not shown much spirit. Indeed, they had behaved pusillanimously ; though this did not depreciate the value of Cochrane's work to Brazil.

There was, however, a strong Portuguese element in the Brazilian General Assembly, which still favoured adherence to the mother country. Besides being instrumental in expelling the Brazilian Prime Minister, this party endeavoured to divest the Emperor of most of his authority, even requiring him to remove his crown in their presence. Appealing to Cochrane, Pedro was advised to uphold his position constitutionally, whereupon, there being no constitution, the Emperor dissolved the Assembly by military force. At Cochrane's suggestion a

constitution was then formed on British lines. It did not appeal to the Portuguese element.

The admiral's interference in the internal politics of the country stirred up a swarm of enemies, and very soon, when he sought to hasten the condemnation of the vast amount of prize-property captured at Maranham, he found himself involved in difficulties.

Applying to the responsible authorities for the pay and prize money due to his seamen, he was offered three months' wages. He refused it with indignation, whereupon the minister ignored his authority as admiralissimo by ordering a ship away without consulting him, and referred to him in the official gazette as commander-in-chief of the naval forces at Rio de Janeiro only, instead of as commander-in-chief of the whole Brazilian fleet.

Meanwhile, an insurrection in favour of the establishment of an independent republic occurring at Pernambuco, an expedition was sent thither to restore order. Cochrane was offered no part in it, and the expedition achieved nothing. The Emperor then ordered him to sail to Pernambuco with four ships to do what he could to recover it. The foreign seamen, however, the backbone of the navy, had deserted in disgust at receiving no wages, while the prize-court established a new regulation that no ships should be considered lawful prizes unless taken a certain distance from the shore. The fleet in consequence did not move.

After further insults from the government, Cochrane, on March 20th, 1824, sent in his resignation. Affairs at Pernambuco were so serious, however, that even his enemies were unwilling that he should go. The next month news arrived that Pernambuco had definitely cast off its allegiance to Brazil, while the Portuguese government was said to be contemplating an expedition to retake the northern provinces.

On July 24th, by the personal intervention of the Emperor, 200,000 dollars were paid to the fleet, while Cochrane himself was mollified by a promise of a pension of half-pay for life, or to his wife if he predeceased her, if he left the Brazilian service at the end of the war.

Finally, on August 2nd, the fleet sailed from Rio with a convoy of 1,200 troops. The soldiers having been landed eighty miles south of Pernambuco, Cochrane himself arrived before that port on the 18th. After some show of resistance the rebels returned to their allegiance. At Maranham, where he arrived on November 9th, he found more trouble, the local president being in conflict with the officer commanding the

troops, and the former having enlisted the negro population on his side. After considerable difficulty the refractory president was shipped off to Rio, and Cochrane set up a new government of his own. His enemies in the south did not fail to attack him for his action, and circulated calumnies against him, not only in Brazil, but also in Europe.

On January 1st, 1825, he tendered his resignation for the fourth time. No notice was taken, and soon afterwards fresh disturbances broke out at Maranham. Declaring martial law, he succeeded in restoring comparative tranquillity. It then occurred to him to demand the return of a large sum of money, part of the proceeds of his captures, which had been advanced to the Maranham government in 1823. After much haggling and further quarrels he agreed to accept a quarter of the sum in question, which was paid in instalments.

Weary of his task in trying to restore order, and, above all, of the thanklessness and incapacity of the Brazilian government, he shifted his flag to the frigate *Piranga*, and on May 18th put to sea. According to his own account he went for the benefit of his health, but either made that excuse to hoodwink the Brazilian government, or through his usual habit of deception. We are told, in the *Narrative of Services*, that by June 11th, when off the Azores in bad weather, he discovered the *Piranga's* masts and rigging to be rotten and unserviceable, and the provisions put on board at Maranham unfit for human consumption. But such excuses from a man of Cochrane's astuteness are difficult to believe, for on June 26th, 1825, the *Piranga* anchored at Spithead, where the admiral had probably intended to go all along.

More quarrels immediately ensued with the Brazilian envoy in London, to whom he applied for money to pay his men and to refit his ship. We need not enter into details ; but having heard in the meanwhile that Cochrane had been offered the command of the Greek navy, the envoy bluntly asked him if it were true that he had accepted it. He refused to reply one way or the other, whereupon the envoy ordered him to take the *Piranga* back to Rio de Janeiro. He refused to do so, for the excellent reason that he had practically concluded his arrangements to command the Greek navy.

Before he had left South America, his English friends had been urging him to throw in his lot with the Greeks in their struggle for independence, and there can be no doubt that his real reason for returning to England was to be on the spot to make the best possible bargain before taking up the new

appointment. At the same time, he did not wish to sever his connection with Brazil until matters with Greece were settled.

He went to Scotland at the end of August, and remained there until the beginning of November. The Brazilian envoy, meanwhile, knowing what was in the wind, and anxious lest he should sell or pledge the *Piranga* to satisfy his claims, wished to oust him at once, and on November 7th wrote to the officer who had been left in command of the frigate, absolutely declining to furnish him with stores, provisions, or pay for the ship's company until officers and men 'cast off all subordination to the Marquis of Maranham.' On or about November 12th Cochrane finally gave up the command. So ended his career under the Brazilian flag.

As in the case of Chili, he had done good service for his adopted country, though his quarrels with the Brazilian government over the subject of his prize-money and emoluments had not terminated at his death. Indeed, it was not until 1877 that the final payment was made to his heirs.

But during the tenure of his command in Brazil he must have made large sums. 'It is impossible to conceal that unqualified and arbitrary acts of the most audacious daring were committed by him and by the ships under his command, occasioning to the National Treasury enormous losses, particularly by the heavy indemnification of an infinite number of bad prizes, which it was obliged to satisfy,' said a report which was made to the Brazilian government.

The fact remains that Lord Cochrane was a poor man when he left England for Chili in 1818. In the words of Sir Fitzroy Kelly, however, Lady Dundonald's counsel, in a speech made before the Committee of Privileges on June 9th, 1863, he was described as having returned from South America 'covered with glory' and 'abounding' or 'loaded with wealth.'

If this be true, where did the wealth come from?

18

After his experience with Chili and Brazil, one is surprised at Cochrane associating himself with the Greeks in their struggle against Turkey. £37,000 down, however, and a further £20,000 on completion of his service, were no small inducements. By the autumn of 1825, he was definitely committed to his new appointment, having stipulated that £300,000 of a recently floated loan of £2,000,000 should be

set aside for the building and equipment of eight men-of-war, that he should be admiralissimo of the entire Greek navy, and be free to undertake operations independently of the Greek government.

Contracts had been placed in England and America for the building of the new ships, and towards the end of October, hearing that they were progressing very slowly, Cochrane came to London from Scotland to expedite matters. It was here that he was informed that the British government was considering his arrest under the Foreign Enlistment Act for his activities in Chili and Brazil. He went at once to Boulogne to avoid apprehension ; but, after a month's stay, heard that proceedings were likely to be taken against him by the French government for the illegal capture of a French ship in the Pacific. He left immediately for Brussels.

It was not until May 8th, 1826, that he sailed for Flushing in his new schooner-yacht *Unicorn*, went ashore at Weymouth, and hurried up to London to inspect the new steamers which were being built at Greenwich. The work had been carried on very slowly. One of the ships, the *Perseverance*, was nearly ready, but the other five were a long way behindhand. Embarking again in the *Unicorn* on May 20th, he cruised round the British Isles while awaiting their completion. Finally, hearing that the *Perseverance* had sailed, he left England on June 12th and a month later anchored at Messina.

For three months he impatiently waited for the arrival of his promised fleet—but no fleet came. Sailing for Marseilles he dallied there until February 14th, 1827, again to be disappointed. The steamers were still unfinished, for the reason that the contractor, according to Cochrane's account, was in the pay of the Turks. With his yacht and a small corvette, Cochrane finally entered Greek waters on March 19th, about eighteen months after first accepting the appointment.

Greece was in a sorry plight. Beaten to its knees by Turkey, the country was also divided against itself, the two rival governments spending their time in incessant wrangling. The fleet, though it had done good work against the Turks with fireships under the gallant leadership of the Greek Admirals Canaris and Miaulis, was in a pitiable condition, the ships generally unserviceable and their crews inefficient and insubordinate. After rounds of high-flown complimentary speeches and congratulations, Cochrane was finally sworn in as First Admiral of Greece on April 18th, with his flag flying on board the *Hellas*, a powerful, American-built frigate. He was in his fifty-second year.

Meanwhile, a force of 1,000 Greek troops, together with 400 women and children, had been besieged by the Turks for nine months in the Acropolis at Athens. The city itself was in danger of capture, two Greek armies under General (afterwards General Sir Richard) Church and General Karaiskakes in position before it being paralysed by a small force of Turks in a monastery midway between them.

Immediately on hoisting his flag, Cochrane went over to Phalerum Bay and joined up with Church's army. Some days were spent in organising the troops, and, in the meanwhile, messengers arrived from the Acropolis to say that the defenders could not hold out for longer than five days. The first step towards its relief was the capture of the monastery, but the Greek general had no plan except to starve out the garrison.

The admiral, chafing with impatience, was urging Karaiskakes to join Church and to press on towards the capital. After some delay the monastery was attacked. It finally surrendered, when the Greeks, finding no loot, massacred the garrison almost to a man.

There was now nothing to prevent the advance upon Athens which Cochrane had persistently urged.

'Church was no coward nor no Fabius neither,' writes Stanley-Lane-Poole in the *English Historical Review* for July 1890, 'but he saw the hopelessness of the admiral's tactics, and, supported by all the Greek commanders, he tried to wait for his opportunity instead of forcing fortune. But Cochrane was resolute ; let them act, he said, or off he would instantly sail and leave the whole force of nearly 10,000 men to starve or be massacred ; and thus it happened that at two councils of war, held in the early days of May, the fatal movement was planned and agreed to.'

The plan might have succeeded had the Greek army been made up of seasoned, well-armed troops. Instead, it was a mere rabble of men with muskets, unprovided even with bayonets or other weapons for the hand-to-hand fighting in which the Turks excelled. And in the battle that took place the Greeks were hopelessly defeated. The defeat became a rout, in which the fugitives, driven to the water's edge by Turkish cavalry, were cut down in their scores. Cochrane himself, who had landed to watch the proceedings, narrowly escaped with his life. Carried into the sea by the flying throng he was eventually rescued by a boat, after standing neck-deep in water.

Athens was taken by Reschid Pasha on June 2nd. Three days later the garrison of the Acropolis surrendered.

THOMAS, LORD COCHRANE
TENTH EARL OF DUNDONALD
Aetat 52

This portrait shows Lord Cochrane as an Admiral in the Greek Navy

From a litho by Bouvier after a painting by James Ramsay

After this first failure the admiral turned to his more legitimate duty of organising the Greek navy, and it was not long before he found himself faced by the usual difficulties. On reviewing the fleet at Poros many of the crews demanded a month's wages in advance. So much had already been spent on the operations before Athens, however, that they could be offered no more than a fortnight's pay. They refused it with indignation, weighed their anchors without orders, and put to sea for their usual privateering and piracy. Cochrane, the First Admiral of Greece, found himself alone with his flagship.

No money was forthcoming from the Greek government, for the country's credit was utterly exhausted. Unwilling to visit harbours, lest his discontented men should desert *en masse*, he cruised among the islands, trying to raise a crew for his flagship. It was a difficult task. Nobody would join unless he received a month's wages in advance, and as soon as the month was up, he refused to stay longer. On May 2nd the admiral put the crew of the *Hellas* to the test by chasing two Turkish frigates. The result warned him not to repeat the experiment.

With such men, and such a lack of money and material, it was an impossible task to obey the government's oft-repeated injunctions to lose no time in securing the independence of Greece. In June, however, with his flagship, a corvette, fourteen Greek brigs, and eight fireships, Cochrane sailed to Alexandria with the object of attacking a force of Egyptian vessels concentrated there for further operations in Greek waters. A Greek officer succeeded in destroying one man-of-war with fireships ; but when the Egyptian fleet weighed anchor for immediate flight, the Greeks, imagining they were about to be attacked, scattered in all directions. Sick at heart, Cochrane took his fleet to Asia Minor and thence to Nauplia, where he was asked by one section of the government to lend his services for the suppression of the other, a request he refused.

On August 1st, off Navarino, where the bulk of the Turkish fleet lay anchored, the *Hellas* chased and captured a 28-gun corvette, after a fight lasting fifty minutes. It was poor consolation enough to a man who had done what Cochrane had done with the miserable little *Speedy*, for the *Hellas* was a fine ship of 64-guns. 'The boys behaved pretty well,' the admiral wrote, in describing the action. 'But the oldest, ugliest, and fiercest-looking bravoes ran to the other side of the deck, roaring like market bulls.'

It is unnecessary to follow him through his months of

weary wrangling with the corrupt government and his own undisciplined seamen. In the autumn of 1827, however, the allied fleets of Britain, France, and Russia were blockading Ibrahim Pasha's Turco-Egyptian fleet at Navarino. The situation became strained, and on October 20th Ibrahim's fleet was brought to action and destroyed by Admiral Sir Edward Codrington. The Duke of Wellington, who became Prime Minister in January, 1828, referred to the affair as 'an untoward event.' Nevertheless, it saved the cause of Greece.

The favourite occupation of the Greek fleet at this time, when away from Cochrane's control, was piracy, which was connived at by the government. On October 24th, indeed, the admirals of the British, French, and Russian fleets issued a joint manifesto announcing their intention of treating all Greek men-of-war as pirates, a fate that most of them undoubtedly deserved, though it would not be fair to make Cochrane responsible for their proceedings. Stung to the quick, he spent some months in trying to stamp out the practice, but on January 10th, 1828, disgusted with the whole business, and, above all, with the supineness of the Greek government, embarked in his yacht and sailed for England.

Arriving in England on February 19th, he found that the Greek steamers were still unfinished, and that the British government were not inclined to permit the entry of British seamen into Greek service. England, in fact, was generally unsympathetic, and, travelling to Paris, Cochrane found the same feelings there. Then one of the Greek deputies in London wrote demanding the return of the £37,000 advanced on the commencement of his service, on the ground that he had broken his contract by leaving Greece. He replied indignantly, accusing the Greek government of interfering with his conduct of the fleet and of covering the seas with a swarm of pirate-vessels. Neither side got satisfaction, but the £37,000 was not returned.

Sailing in one of the new steamers he again arrived in Greece at the end of September, only to be treated with disrespect by the government. The accounts for the money which had been entrusted to him for the upkeep of the navy were questioned, whereupon Cochrane resigned his commission and surrendered all claim to the £20,000 which he was to have received at the end of his service—not that there was the smallest chance of his getting it. Circumstances had altered. Greece was virtually free, for the French troops had driven the

Turkish and Egyptian forces out of the Morea. A liberator was no longer needed.

Handing the new steamer over to the government, he requested a passage home to England. He was provided with a wretched brig, commanded by a desperado who had disobeyed orders, and now lost no chance of insulting his former admiral. There was a stormy interview on the subject between Cochrane and the president, but the Russian admiral, Heyden, came to the rescue by offering a passage to Malta in one of his corvettes. 'I beg,' the Russian officer wrote, 'that Lord Cochrane will send back to their kennels the miserable causes of his annoyance and proceed to Malta, or to Zante if he wishes, in one of my corvettes. . . . As regards his salute, I will receive him with the honours due to his rank, and with musical honours, and, at his departure, I will man yards.'

So on December 20th, 1828, Cochrane sailed for Malta in a foreign man-of-war, having spent three years in trying to help a wretched country that would not lift a hand to help itself. 'Thank God,' he wrote, 'we are clear of a country where there is no hope of amelioration for half a century to come.'

Those three years of his life had been utterly wasted.

19

The termination of Cochrane's service with the Greek Navy saw the end of his fighting career. He remained in Paris until September, 1829, and then returned to England, still anxious to obtain the reinstatement in the Royal Navy which, right or wrong, he considered to be his just due.

On June 4th, 1828, during his flying visit home, he had addressed a memorial to the Duke of Clarence, then Lord High Admiral, asking for his case to be reconsidered. It contained no fresh arguments as to his innocence, but was couched in gentler language than his former appeals, and did not make those wholesale allegations as to the probity of all those engaged in his prosecution during the Stock Exchange trial. The Cabinet, however, did not comply with the prayer of the memorial.

In 1830 he drew up another pamphlet on the subject which was presented to William IV on December 10th, after the fall of the Duke of Wellington's administration. It also failed, Lord Melbourne informing Cochrane on December 18th that His Majesty had returned the letter, 'but had not been pleased to signify any commands.'

July 1st, 1831, saw the death of Lord Cochrane's father, which made the subject of our memoir a Scottish peer as the tenth Earl of Dundonald. Though not at the time a Member of Parliament, it at once did away with any hopes he may have had of urging his reinstatement in the House of Commons.

Lady Dundonald, however, left nothing undone. A fascinating and talented woman, she pleaded her husband's cause to members of the Ministry, even gained admittance to King William IV and laid the case before him. The King's heart was touched by her entreaties, and, in a personal interview with His Majesty, Dundonald was permitted to speak for himself. What he said, what arguments he used, we cannot tell, but on March 24th, 1832, he was granted a free pardon, a term which offended him as indicating previous guilt. On May 2nd his name was restored to the Navy List as a rear-admiral.

There being no immediate prospect of employment at sea, he busied himself in invention. Realising that sailing ships were fast becoming obsolete, he set his versatile and ingenious mind to the improvement and simplification of engines and boilers for use in vessels of war, being so far successful that the Admiralty were persuaded to build a steam-frigate on lines suggested by him. That this ship proved a failure was probably no fault of his. His experimental work and experience paved the way for others and simplified their labours.

In 1841, four years after Queen Victoria's accession, he was granted one of the good service pensions available for flag-officers, and on November 23rd of that same year was promoted, in the normal course of events, to the rank of vice-admiral. Reinstated as a Knight Grand Cross of the Order of the Bath on May 22nd, 1847, on the occasion of the Queen's birthday, Prince Albert, cutting aside all formalities, sent him the star and sash of the order to enable him to wear it at the Queen's birthday drawing-room on May 27th.

Towards the end of 1847 he was offered the command of the North America and West Indies station, an appointment he accepted with gratitude. Sailing for Halifax on March 28th, 1848, he hoisted his flag as commander-in-chief of a British fleet at the age of seventy-two. It is unnecessary to describe his routine work on a foreign station in peace-time, but returning to England in 1851 after the normal period of service, he was promoted to admiral in his turn, and again devoted himself to invention and scientific research. Among other things, he had seen the pitch lake in the island of Trinidad,

and came home full of an idea of utilising this natural and cheap product for the manufacture of bituminous concrete for paving, or what we should now call ' tarmac.'

During the Crimean war, as previously mentioned, he offered his secret plans to the government for the reduction of Cronstadt and Sebastopol, even volunteering to go afloat for the purpose. His plans, however, were not adopted.

Appointed rear-admiral of the United Kingdom in October, 1854, he was soon afterwards elected an Elder Brother of Trinity House. But nothing had yet been done to restore his banner to Henry the Seventh's chapel as a Knight Grand Cross of the Order of the Bath. Neither had the £1,000 fine, paid as a result of the Stock Exchange trial, been refunded, nor half-pay been granted for the period of his removal from the Navy. All these things were very dear to his heart, and, if truly innocent of the fraud of which he had been convicted, he had a right to expect them. The government, however, in granting him a free pardon, and restoring his rank and honours, evidently did not mean to imply that they considered him innocent. It seems that the pardon and restoration to rank and honours were granted to a gallant officer as a reward for good service—nothing more.

In 1857 he published his first book dealing with his services in South America, while in 1859 and 1860 there appeared the two volumes of the famous *Autobiography of a Seaman*, dealing with his earlier career in the British Navy. These narratives were produced partly to rehabilitate himself in the eyes of the world, partly to strengthen claims for money that he considered to be due to him by the British, Chilian, Peruvian, and Brazilian governments.

The books were actually written, as already stated, by a Mr. G. B. Earp, described by Lord Dundonald in his will as his ' friend and literary coadjutor.' Earp, moreover, was left ten per cent. of any money that might be forthcoming from the governments mentioned, while in the will it was also stated that to Earp's ' literary exertions would be mainly owing any recovery of the said sums.'

At an earlier stage of this narrative we have seen how Earp set about his task. He relied, he said, partly upon documents, partly upon Lord Dundonald's own statements, but admits that at the earl's advanced age his memory sometimes failed him. It could not be otherwise. But much of the information contained in the narratives was derived from a more untrustworthy source altogether—from a Mr. William Jackson,

whom Cochrane first met in 1814, and retained as his private and confidential secretary until the conclusion of his service in South America.

Jackson was an unscrupulous adventurer who, on one occasion at least, descended to blackmail. To a large extent he was Cochrane's evil genius, the man of whom Lady Dundonald said in 1862 : ' I always despised the man, and look upon him as the greatest enemy my husband ever had in life, the ruin to his purse and character. Alas, Lord Cochrane had much more confidence in him than he deserved.'

These are strong words ; but if Earp was lax as a compiler, and Jackson was chary of the truth—if, indeed, both men were out to make money out of the writings, too much faith should not be placed upon either of the works generally attributed to the pen of the tenth Earl of Dundonald. The books were not written by him, merely under his direction.

On October 30th, 1860, a few weeks after the publication of the second volume of the *Autobiography*, Lord Dundonald underwent an operation from which he never recovered. He died at dawn on October 31st, and on November 14th, in the presence of various distinguished friends, his mortal remains were buried in Westminster Abbey. On the day before the funeral, by the express wish of Queen Victoria and the Prince Consort, his banner as a Knight Grand Cross of the Order of the Bath was at last replaced in the chapel, down whose steps it had been kicked with every mark of ignominy forty-six years before.

His mortal remains lie in the centre of the nave, under a plain white slab recording his prowess and daring. The stone bears at its corners the arms of Chili, Peru, Brazil, and Greece, together with the inscriptions, *Independencia*, *Libramento*, and their Greek equivalent.

20

In working through the story of Cochrane's stormy life, one is struck again and again by the narrow margins by which he escaped disaster and ruin. His insubordinate behaviour to his official superiors, his extraordinary attitude in regard to the vote of thanks to Lord Gambier, his campaigns in the House of Commons for the rectification of naval abuses, and his general passion for making himself obnoxious, would have damned many a smaller man without family influence.

He was tactless, and did not shine either as a politician or

a reformer. He was obstinate and intractable, too impatient and too fiercely intolerant, too selfish and too quarrelsome; too anxious always to uphold what he considered the right, really to trouble what weapons he used or whose feelings he hurt. He loved fighting for fighting's sake, and was never happier than upon his quarter-deck in action. Failing that, he seems always to have been ready to pick a quarrel. It has truthfully been said that his pugnacious and undisciplined disposition made his worst enemies his own countrymen.

Yet one cannot help admiring the man. He had a wonderful energy and fertility of resource, a decided sense of fun, and a natural genius for war. His more brilliant exploits, however, like the capture of the *Gamo* and *Esmeralda*; his work with the explosion-vessels in Aix Roads; his guerilla warfare on the coasts of France and Spain in the *Speedy* and *Impérieuse*; his voyage to Valdivia in the sinking *O'Higgins*, were the deeds of a captain, not of an admiral. One cannot assign him any definite place as a tactician, for he took no part in any general fleet engagement worthy of the name.

His work in the *Speedy* and the *Impérieuse* was work well done, though it is idle to pretend that there were not other naval officers during that eventful period of war whose service was not equally adventurous and meritorious. His chequered career became public property through his trial and the two books with which his name is associated. His trial and sentence for the Stock Exchange hoax of 1814, indeed, really enhanced his reputation by cutting short his service in the British Navy. It gave the remaining years of his life in the service of foreign countries, and his subsequent restoration to rank and honours, that romantic and adventurous twist which so appeals to the popular taste and imagination. Few British naval officers had such a thrilling story to tell during the piping times of peace, and we may expect that, in their particular line, both the *Narrative of Services in Peru, Chili, and Brazil*, and the *Autobiography of a Seaman*, in spite of their inaccuracies and misstatements, were what we should now call 'best-sellers.'

It is painfully obvious, however, that he attached undue importance to prize-money, that, in the words of the Earl of St. Vincent, he was 'money-getting.' With all his faults, however, he was a great seaman, a great master of his trade. Perhaps his most pleasing trait was the fatherly care he bestowed upon his officers and men. Their troubles were his troubles, their battles his, and he fought the authorities tooth and nail to secure what he considered their just reward, even

at the risk of making himself unpopular. His men loved him for his cool courage, his resourcefulness—above all, for his care and sympathy, and it was Marryat, in most of his naval novels, who depicted Cochrane, his first commanding officer, as the ideal frigate captain, which indeed he was.

His service in the responsible position of a naval commander-in-chief during war was performed under the ensigns of Chili and Brazil. Again it was service well done ; but service for which he went ill rewarded.

Though one cannot put Cochrane on a pedestal as a model for everything that a naval officer should be, he cannot but be regarded as a good example of a man of action—a man who feared no enemy and whose personal courage was unsurpassed.

FREDERICK MARRYAT

Captain, Royal Navy

1792–1848

FREDERICK MARRYAT

I

'THERE was no occasion for you to make the admission that you are somewhat warm-tempered: your letter establishes the fact. Considering your age, you are a little volcano, and if the insurance were aware of your frequent visits to the Royal Exchange, they would demand double premium for the building. Indeed, I have my surmises NOW as to the last conflagration.

. . . . . .

'Your remark as to the money I have received may sound well, mentioned as an isolated fact; but how does it sound when it is put in juxtaposition with the sums you have received? I, who have found everything, receiving a pittance, while you, who have found nothing but the shop to sell in, receiving such a lion's share. I assert again that it is slavery. I am Sinbad the Sailor, and you are the Old Man of the Mountain, clinging on my back, and you must not be surprised at my wishing to throw you off the first convenient opportunity.

'The fact is, you have the vice of old age very strong upon you, and you are blinded by it, but put the question to your sons, and ask them if they consider the present agreement fair. Let them arrange with me, and do you go and read your Bible. We all have our own ideas of Paradise, and if other authors think like me, the most pleasurable portion of anticipated bliss is that there will be no publishers there. The idea often supports me after an interview with one of your fraternity.'

The letter in which the foregoing passages occur was written by Captain Marryat to one of his publishers with whom, like many an author to-day, he did not see eye to eye in the matter of payment for a book. There had, apparently, been rather a heated correspondence on the subject, and the novelist's letter was part of the reply to another communication in which he was called 'somewhat eccentric' and 'an odd creature,'

and which the publisher had concluded by saying, ' I am somewhat warm-tempered myself, and therefore make allowances for yours, which certainly is warm enough.'

One would have imagined, from the letters exchanged between them, that Marryat and his various publishers ' had been natural enemies,' says the novelist's daughter, Florence (Mrs. Ross Church), who published her father's *Life and Letters* in 1872. All the available evidence goes to prove, however, that they mutually benefited by their transactions. Marryat knew perfectly well what his literary work was worth, and how to frame an agreement that was not one-sided. He was generously paid, even according to modern standards. Nevertheless, he was firmly imbued with the idea that his publishers were waxing rich at his expense, and, pressed for money, wanted as much as he could get for himself. Small blame to him.

But publishers, even in Marryat's day, were neither thieves nor philanthropists. They were just ordinary men of business.

2

The year 1929 marks a centenary of some importance to admirers of Marryat, for 1829 saw the publication of his first novel, *Adventures of a Naval Officer ; or, Frank Mildmay*, for which the author received the sum of £400.

Frank Mildmay, the hero of the story, is a low fellow—a shameless, insolent, and cold-blooded young rascal of a decidedly vicious mode of life. The tale was written in the first person, and many of the sea adventures and incidents were true and easily recognisable in the small and exclusive world which represented naval society. The book was read, discussed, and interpreted, and as its author had drawn largely upon his own experience, and had even given the hero his own initials, ' F. M.,' the work was greeted by the Navy, the critics, and the public, as a more or less faithful record of Marryat's early life. It may or may not have been, and however much he might protest, the impression, and a disagreeable one, still prevailed.

Marryat realised he had made a mistake, and, some years later, in 1834, when editor of the *Metropolitan Magazine*, and having in the meanwhile published three other books, *The King's Own*, *Newton Forster*, and the well-known *Peter Simple*, published a statement on his work in his own journal.

' *The Naval Officer*,' he says, after denying the authorship of

various anonymous naval works, which it was popularly supposed he also had written, 'was our first attempt, and its having been our first attempt, must be offered in extenuation of its many imperfections ; it was written hastily, and before it was complete we were appointed to a ship. We cared much about our ship and little about our book. The first was diligently taken charge of by ourselves, the second was left in the hands of others, to get on how it could. Like most bantlings put out to nurse, it did not get on very well. As we happen to be in communicative vein, it may be as well to remark that, being written in the autobiographical style, it was asserted by good-natured friends, and believed in general, that it was a history of the author's own life. Now, without pretending to have been better than we should be in our earlier days, we do most solemnly assure the public that had we run the career of vice of the hero of *The Naval Officer*, at all events, we should have had sufficient sense of shame not to have avowed it. Except for the hero and heroine, and those parts of the work which supply the slight plot of it, as a novel, the work in itself is materially true, especially in the narrative of sea adventure, most of which did (to the best of our recollection) occur to the author. . . .

'The "confounded licking" we received for our first attempt in the "critical notices" is probably well known to the reader—at all events we have not forgotten it. Now, with some, this severe castigation of their first offence would have had the effect of their never offending again ; but we felt that our punishment was rather too severe, it produced indignation instead of contrition, and we determined to write again in spite of all the critics in the universe ; and, in the due course of nine months, we produced *The King's Own*. In *The Naval Officer*, we had sowed all our wild oats ; we had *paid off* those who had ill-treated us, and we had no further personality to indulge in. *The King's Own*, therefore, was wholly fictitious in character, in plot, and in events, as have been its successors. *The King's Own* was followed by *Newton Forster* ; *Newton Forster* by *Peter Simple*. These are *all* our productions. Reader, we have told our tale.'

The greater portion of *Frank Mildmay*, or *The Naval Officer*, as Marryat preferred to call it, was written between his paying off of the *Tees*, in the beginning of 1826, and his appointment to the command of the *Ariadne* in November, 1828. As we learn from the author's own statement, however, it was still unfinished when the *Ariadne* commissioned.

The King's Own, a very different style of book to its

predecessor, was written during his two years' service in command of the *Ariadne*, where he ' was employed on a diplomatic service at Madeira and the Western Isles, and subsequently searching for supposed dangers in the Atlantic Ocean.' [1]

The hero of this work, the child of Edward ' Peters ' the mutineer, is distinctly a good boy, who subsequently becomes a midshipman and eventually turns out to be the grandson of an admiral. As he first appeared in the book, Marryat described him as ' a little boy about six years old. He was the perfection of childish beauty ; chestnut hair, waved in curls on his forehead ; health flowed on his rosy cheeks, dimples sported over his face as he altered the expression of his countenance, and his large dark eyes flashed with intelligence and animation.' This was a portrait of his own child William, who died at the age of seven, and of whom to the last day of his life, Marryat spoke with the greatest tenderness.

But *The King's Own* is curious for its occasional digressions. We can see that its author, busy with his work as captain of his ship, was sometimes unable to concentrate upon his story, and suffered from bouts of distaste for writing during which he did not know what to say next. What writer has not occasionally been subject to the same feelings of emptiness and lack of ideas ?

' Should you feel half as tired with reading as I am with writing,' he starts Chapter xxxvii., ' I forgive you with all my heart if you throw down the book and read no more. I have written too fast—I have quite sprained my imagination—for you must know that this is all fiction, every word of it. . . . Let me look round the cabin for some external object to act as a fillip to our exhausted imagination. A little thing will do. Well, here's an ant. That's quite enough. *Commençons.*'

He proceeds to write 3,100 words, in which the ant made him think of his grandmother, his grandmother of his uncle, his uncle of his female cousin, and her death of a dream. He wanders on to anecdotes of animals on board ship, and, having completed his task without having once mentioned his hero or advanced his story, finishes by being rather pleased with himself at completing ' a whole chapter out of nothing.'

Chapter xlix., too, gives us an idea of Marryat's curious method of work. There are sixty chapters in the book, but the forty-ninth was written last.

' Congratulate me, reader, that notwithstanding I have been beating against wind and tide, that is to say, writing this book,

[1] Marshall's *Naval Biography*, Vol. III., part i., p. 270.

through all the rolling and pitching, headache and indigestion, incident to the confined and unnatural life of a sailor, I have arrived at my last chapter : Now all is ready. Give me the bottle of wine—and, as she '—(the book)—' rushes into the sea of public opinion, upon which her merits are to be ascertained, I christen her *The King's Own*.'

He goes on to admit that he is not exactly pleased with his production, in other words, that his hero is not sufficiently the hero of his tale.

We can agree.

Written in the midst of those constant interruptions inseparable from the life of the captain of one of His Majesty's ships of war, *The King's Own* is certainly not up to the standard of *Peter Simple*, published in 1834 ; *Mr. Midshipman Easy*, 1836 ; or that famous children's classic, *Masterman Ready*, which made its first appearance in 1841. The latter still remains one of the best books of its kind in the English language, better by far than *Swiss Family Robinson*, with its improbable characters and impossible mingling of flora and fauna.

Excluding *Rattlin the Reefer*, 1838, which, though generally ascribed to Marryat, was really written by E. Howard, his nautical sub-editor on the staff of the *Metropolitan*, Marryat wrote twenty-two books between 1829 and the time of his death in 1848. Two others, partly written when he died, were finished by another hand. They were long books,[1] longer by far than the average novels of to-day, which generally contain between 80,000 and 100,000 words. And this output in the nineteen years of his writing life, in the midst of his travels, his attempts at farming, and many other activities, represented a prodigious industry when the writing mood was upon him.

It is as an author that Marryat's name passes down to posterity. Yet, from the day he first went afloat with Lord Cochrane in the frigate *Impérieuse* in 1806 as a boy of fourteen, to the time he left the *Ariadne* in 1830, a post-captain and a Companion of the Bath, he probably saw more actual fighting and more varied service than dozens of his contemporaries. He invented a code of signals which was adopted in the mercantile marine of many countries, and wrote papers on the abolition of impressment in the naval service and the suppression of smuggling, which were forwarded to the Admiralty. Of his personal courage there is no doubt whatsoever. During the time he served afloat he received twenty-seven certificates, recommendations, and votes of thanks for saving the lives of

[1] On calculating the length of *Peter Simple* I find it contains some 200,000 words.

others at the risk of his own, and in 1818 received a gold medal from the Royal Humane Society.

He was versatile and courageous, a good officer and essentially a man of action. Had he remained in the Navy he might have attained flag rank and have commanded a fleet. But 1830, the time at which he virtually retired from the Service, was a period of retrenchment after protracted wars. There were comparatively few ships in commission and the lists of officers were overcrowded. Faced with long periods of unemployment and half-pay, having already written two moderately successful books, and possessing a wife and a growing family in England, he felt the writing instinct still strong in him, and chose, instead of remaining in the Service, to devote his energy to the more congenial and probably more lucrative business of literature.

Turning to his new vocation with industry, he became one of the few naval officers who have ever made a name for themselves outside their true profession. In short, in severing his connection with the sea and taking to literature, he saved himself, though unconsciously, from the complete and final oblivion into which most of his naval contemporaries have long since passed.

3

Frederick Marryat, one of fifteen children, of whom ten only reached maturity, was born in Great George Street, Westminster, on July 10th, 1792. He was the second son of Joseph Marryat, a man of considerable income, at one time Member of Parliament for Sandwich, Chairman of the committee of Lloyds, and Colonial Agent for the island of Grenada. His mother, Charlotte, was the third daughter of Frederick Geyer, or Von Geyer, of Boston, a well known American loyalist, who had suffered greatly during the American War of Independence through his attachment to the British cause.

Of Frederick's childhood there is little to be said. He was, we are told, a small, slightly built boy with an abnormally large head, nevertheless a lad of spirit. If, as is popularly supposed, he drew upon his personal experience for material for his books, his home life cannot have been very happy. His father, a strict and a hard man of business, probably had little time to devote to his numerous progeny.

With his elder brother Joseph, he was in due course sent to a school at Ponder's End, kept by a Mr. Freeman. He seems frequently to have been in trouble, and several times ran away

with the intention of going to sea, not, we are informed, because he disliked hard work or school discipline, but because he was compelled to wear Joseph's outgrown clothing. In this he has our sincere sympathy.

After one of these truancies Mr. Marryat showed lamentable weakness. Pursuing and catching his son with much trouble, he gave him money and sent him back to school in the carriage. It arrived empty. Frederick had managed to escape while the cab was in motion, and, slipping quietly home, took his younger brothers to the theatre with the money his father had given him.

Leaving the academy at Ponder's End, he studied for a time with a tutor, until the inevitable happened and he again ran away. As he was now fourteen years old, his father at last allowed him to have his own way, and, being a man of some position and influence, arranged that he should be taken as a Volunteer 1st Class—otherwise a midshipman—on board the crack frigate *Impérieuse*, commanded by Captain Lord Cochrane, who had already made his mark in the Service. The youngster joined his first ship on September 23rd, 1806.

The day of fleet actions was over. Trafalgar, fought and won the year before, had broken the hearts of our enemies and destroyed their initiative at sea. Thereafter, their line-of-battleships remained in harbour closely blockaded by the British, which cruised to and fro off the hostile ports, or coolly used enemy anchorages as though they were their own. In this present era of steam, long-range guns, aeroplanes, and wireless telegraphy, it is difficult to imagine an enemy inshore squadron calmly lying at anchor off, say, Cowes, while watching a fleet in Portsmouth harbour. Yet this approximates to what took place off Brest and Toulon in the early years of the nineteenth century.

The blockade was dull and dreary enough to those serving in the heavy ships. It entailed long periods spent at sea in all weathers, with the crews living for the greater portion of the time upon salt provisions. The intense monotony and boredom was rarely alleviated by any fillip of excitement. It was to the lighter craft, the frigates and sloops, that all the chances of fighting came—the pursuit of hostile privateers, the harassing of enemy trade, and the raiding and destruction of coastal batteries and signal stations.

Marryat's first cruise in the *Impérieuse*, however, nearly ended in shipwreck, and the loss of every soul on board. The port-admiral at Plymouth, an obstinate, peppery gentleman who

would be obeyed, and would not always listen to reason, had received orders from the Admiralty for the frigate to proceed to sea. Disregarding the fact that her guns were unmounted, that store and provision lighters were still alongside, and that the ship was in a state of utter confusion, he fired gun after gun to enforce his signal for sailing.

'A few hours more,' as Marryat himself says, 'would have enabled her to proceed to sea with security, but they were denied.' So the moment the rudder, which was being hung, would steer the ship, the *Impérieuse* hove up her anchor and made sail, with, according to Cochrane himself, 'a lighter full of provisions on one side, a second with ordnance stores on the other, and a third filled with gunpowder towing astern.'

Once outside the Sound she met a heavy gale. The guns were still unmounted and the decks littered with miscellaneous stores, and in the confusion some iron had been placed near the binnacle. It deflected the compass needle, so that the ship was steered out of her course.

'At midnight,' says Marryat, 'in a heavy gale at the close of November, so dark that you could not distinguish any object, however close, the *Impérieuse* dashed upon the rocks between Ushant and the Main. The cry of terror which ran through the lower decks; the grating of the keel as she was forced in; the violence of the shocks which convulsed the frame of the vessel; the hurrying up of the ship's company without their clothes; and then the enormous waves which again bore her up, and carried her clear over the reef, will never be effaced from my memory.'

She beat over the reef with no other damage than the loss of her false keel, and, coming to an anchor, found herself at daylight in a deep pool surrounded by rocks, some of them as high as her lower yards. The ship and her company had been saved by a miracle.

After a cruise of three months, during which she captured three French transports and a dozen merchantmen, and attacked and destroyed a battery or two, the *Impérieuse* returned to England to enable Lord Cochrane to stand for Parliament and to be elected for Westminster.

For seven months, indeed, while his frigate remained idle, Cochrane employed his time in the House in attacking naval abuses. He did so with more vehemence than tact, so much so, according to his own account, that the Admiralty considered it advisable to rid themselves of his importunities by sending him abroad. It does not appear to have occurred to Cochrane

that he also was abusing his position by keeping a fully-manned frigate in harbour during war, while he, still drawing full pay for the command of her, pursued his parliamentary activities in London. On September 12th, 1807, however, with Cochrane again in command, the *Impérieuse* sailed from Spithead with a convoy to join Lord Collingwood in the Mediterranean.

Then began what was undoubtedly the most eventful period of Marryat's life. The Mediterranean was pre-eminently the happy hunting ground of the British frigates and small craft, and Cochrane, untrammelled by superior authority in his independent cruises, was in his own element.

With all his faults of self-assertion and intolerance, his aggressiveness, his impatience with senior officers, and his total inability to see that reforms must be carried out gradually and at their proper time, Cochrane was the very best type of frigate captain. He was a good seaman, with a careful, fatherly eye for the welfare of his officers and men. He was a daring fighter, brave and dashing, yet endowed with that sense of caution and cunning which is akin to genius. Whatever he turned his hand to called forth all his fierce energy and determination, and the influence of the man, seen on the quarter-deck of his own ship in action, not in the House of Commons or wrangling with his senior officers, left its indelible mark on the impressionable mind of his fifteen-year-old midshipman, Frederick Marryat. Afterwards, when that midshipman became a man of experience and a novelist, one can see his admiration for all that was best in his first captain's character shining out in his portrayal of frigate captains.

4

Like most other newly-joined officers of the period, Marryat, though he made friends in the midshipmen's berth, came in for the usual bullying. He describes it in his books, and says in his private journal, 'there was no species of tyranny, injustice, and persecution, to which youngsters were not compelled to submit from those who were their superiors in bodily strength.'

One of the senior midshipmen, Henry Cobbett, treated him brutally and became his enemy, until, falling overboard at Malta, Marryat saved his life. The incident is described in *Frank Mildmay*. 'The officers and ship's company gave me more credit for this action than I really deserved,' says the

author, speaking in the words of his hero. 'To have saved any person under such circumstances they said was a noble deed, but to risk my life for a man who had always, from my first coming into the ship, been my bitterest enemy, was more than they could have expected, and was undoubtedly the noblest revenge that I could have taken. But they were deceived, they knew me not: it was my vanity and the desire of oppressing my enemy under an intolerable weight of obligation that induced me to rush to his rescue; moreover, as I stood on the gangway witnessing his struggles for life, I felt that I was about to lose all the revenge I had so long laid up in store. In short, I could not spare him, and only saved him, as a cat does a mouse, to torment him.'

Marryat's real feelings, however, were very different from those he attributed to his detestable Frank Mildmay, as he clearly shows in a letter written to his mother soon after the event. 'From that moment I have loved the fellow as I never loved friend before,' he says. 'All my hate is forgotten. I have saved his life.'

October found the *Impérieuse* at Malta, a knowledge of which island served him in good stead when he came to write *Mr. Midshipman Easy*. After two short cruises not devoid of excitement, she was next, in January, 1808, despatched on an independent mission to the Balearic Islands and the coast of Spain, with which country Britain was still at war. Between January and the end of May upwards of thirty enemy vessels were captured or destroyed, and various forts, batteries, and signal stations raided by landing parties.

One particularly hot encounter which took place in Almeria Bay, on the Andalusian coast, is typical of many others and well worthy of mention as an instance of Cochrane's daring. Marryat himself took part in it, and describing it afterwards in *Frank Mildmay*, attempted to disguise it by moving the scene to Arcassan Bay.

Cochrane had marked down a large enemy privateer of 16 guns, which had previously beaten off the boats of the *Spartan* after inflicting a loss of nearly sixty killed and wounded. Adopting the perfectly legitimate ruse of hoisting American colours, he ran into the harbour with his frigate, anchored with springs on his cables, and furled his sails. There were batteries all round the anchorage, and though the Spaniards had their suspicions, they did not open fire.

Close to the *Impérieuse* on one side lay the privateer. On the other were two heavily laden brigs and a xebec. Numerous

small craft lay further inshore. The frigate hoisted out and manned her boats, the rest of the *Impérieuse's* crew going to their guns. The order was given, and while one pinnace dashed at the privateer, the others made for the brigs and xebec.

Marryat was on board the pinnace, and no sooner was she alongside her enemy than she was received with a murderous fire, which killed or wounded half the boat's crew. Led by the first-lieutenant, Caulfield, the remainder scrambled on board. Caulfield instantly fell back dead into the boat with thirteen bullets in his body. Marryat, close behind, was knocked backwards into the boat by the lieutenant's corpse, and, stunned and trampled upon by the others in their eagerness to clamber on board, was left for dead.

Out of the whole crew of the privateer only fifteen escaped by running below. No quarter was given by the infuriated British seamen, every man on deck being either hewn into pieces, or shot in the water if he leapt overboard. The firing from the privateer, meanwhile, had been the signal for the batteries to join in, and now, as Marryat described it, 'was presented the animated scene of the boats boarding in every direction, with more or less resistance; the whole bay reverberating with the roar of cannon, the smooth water ploughed up in every quarter by the shot directed against the frigate and boats, while the *Impérieuse* returned the fire, warping round and round with her springs to silence the most galling. This continued for nearly an hour, by which time the captured vessels were under all sail, and then the *Impérieuse* hove up her anchor, and, with the English colours waving at her gaff, and still keeping up an undiminished fire, sailed slowly out the victor.'

Marryat, left for dead, lay insensible in the bottom of the boat across the body of the first-lieutenant, and nearly suffocated with his blood, remaining thus until laid out on the deck of the prize. The surgeon and his assistants presently arrived from the *Impérieuse*. One of the midshipmen, who had not taken part in the affray, came also. Seeing what he imagined to be Marryat's corpse, he gave it a slight kick, saying, 'Here is a young cock that has done crowing! Well, for a wonder, this chap has cheated the gallows.'

'The sound of the fellow's detested voice was enough to recall me from the grave if my orders had been signed,' Marryat wrote. 'I faintly exclaimed, "You're a liar," which, even with all the melancholy scene around us, produced a burst of laughter at his expense. I was removed to the ship, put

to bed and bled, and was soon able to narrate the particulars of my adventure, but I continued a long time dangerously ill.'

It is while writing of this cruise that Marryat mentioned the superstitious ideas of most seamen that their ships have their lucky and unlucky days. Friday, as we know, is still supposed to be unlucky as a day of sailing, for the reason that when Catholicism was in its infancy, the priests forbade vessels to put to sea on that day of fast on which Our Lord suffered. But Sunday was the lucky day of the *Impérieuse*, for on that day occurred most of her outstanding exploits.

Life for everybody on board the frigate was one continuous round of excitement, and Marryat, who saw his share of the fighting, made full use of his thrilling experiences in *Frank Mildmay*, *Peter Simple*, and *Mr. Midshipman Easy*.

'The day that passed without a shot being fired in anger, was with us a blank day,' he wrote years afterwards. 'The boats were hardly secured on the booms than they were cast loose and out again ; the yard and stay tackles were for ever hoisting up and lowering down. The expedition with which parties were formed for service ; the rapidity of the frigate's movements, night and day ; the hasty sleep, snatched at all hours ; the waking up at the report of the guns, which seemed the only key-note to the hearts of those on board ; the beautiful precision of our fire ; the coolness and courage of our captain, inoculating the whole of the ship's company ; the suddenness of our attacks, the gathering after the combat, the killed lamented, the wounded almost envied ; the powder so burnt into our faces that years could not remove it ; the proved character of every man and officer on board, the implicit trust and the adoration we felt for our commander ; the ludicrous situations which would occur even in the extremest danger and create mirth when death was staring you in the face, the hair-breadth escapes, and the indifference to life shown by all—when memory sweeps along those years of excitement even now, my pulse beats more quickly with the reminiscence.'

Fine words these : and fine training as a fighting seaman for a lad of only sixteen !

And what stirring, colourful material did the many exploits of the *Impérieuse* provide to the future sailor-novelist who could not, on his own admission, help seeing the ridiculous even in the midst of danger, death, and destruction.

It was Marryat's rollicking fun and sense of the ludicrous that went so far towards popularising his books. To take *Mr. Midshipman Easy* alone ; who can resist chuckling at Jack

Easy's singular views on the rights of man, his interpretation of the Articles of War, the loss of the boatswain's trousers, and the famous triangular duel?

On June 6th, 1808, Napoleon issued his decree abolishing the Spanish provisional government and setting his brother Joseph upon the throne. In one great burst of spontaneous patriotism the Spaniards rose to arms to expel the hated French. Their action gave Britain what she most wished for, an alliance with Spain and a continental theatre of war against Napoleon.

Although their doings find no mention in school history books, Cochrane and his *Impérieuse* played their parts in the Mediterranean during the opening phases of the Peninsular War, for on June 21st he received orders to render every possible assistance to our new allies and set about his task with all his usual vigour.

Hugging the shore, he harassed the French troops pouring into Spain by way of the roads skirting the coast of Catalonia—blowing up roads and bridges where they ran along the face of the cliffs, organising the defence of the coast towns, destroying batteries, sending in his boats to capture or destroy French transports or supply ships working their way down the coast towards Barcelona, and occasionally varying the work by running up the French seaboard towards Marseilles, destroying signal stations and capturing the code-books.

His energy and constant vigilance made it impossible for the French to send men, munitions, and stores by sea. Instead, they were forced to adopt the costly alternative of using inland routes through an inhospitable, mountainous terrain teeming with Spanish irregulars.

Marryat had his full share of all this excitement, and extracts from his log, taken from his biography written by his daughter (Mrs. Ross Church), and here reprinted as a footnote,[1] are eloquent in their stark simplicity of statement.

[1] 1808

July 24th	Taking guns from the batteries.
„ 25th	Burning bridges and dismantling batteries to impede the French.
„ 30th–31st	Attacked and took the Castle of Mongat; received ninety-five prisoners.
August 1st	Taking the brass guns from the batteries.
„ 15th	Took a French despatch boat off Cette.
„ 18th	Took and destroyed a signal post.
„ 19th	Blew up a signal post.
„ 22nd	Sent boats to destroy a signal post, but were repulsed.
„ 23rd	Blew up a signal post.
„ 24th	Destroyed a signal post and took a battery—seven men hurt.
September 3rd	Sent boats to cut out a privateer, but were repulsed.
„ 4th	Engaged batteries with shot and shell and rockets.

Beside other adventures he took part in the attack on the Castle of Mongat on July 30th, 1808, and in the gallant defence of Fort Trinidad at Rosas, in December, for which he was mentioned in Lord Cochrane's despatch to the commander-in-chief, Lord Collingwood. A vivid account of the defence afterwards appeared in *Frank Mildmay*.

In the course of his various engagements the young midshipman was wounded three times, though luckily not seriously. At Rosas he was bayoneted in the stomach, but part of his shirt being thrust into his body, plugged the wound and prevented bleeding. In the excitement of the action he felt no pain, and it was not until he arrived on board and undressed that he realised he was wounded.

In February, 1909, the *Impérieuse* sailed for England. Cochrane, with his single frigate, had done more to harass the

September	7th	Cut out some small vessels—Dr. Sorrel killed—*Spartan* in company.
„	8th	Destroyed a telegraph off Port Vendre.
„	9th	Stormed and took two batteries—beat off from a third ship—much damaged in hull and rigging—two men hurt.
„	11th	Rocketing the town of Adge and engaging batteries.
„	12th	Rocketing the town of Cette—ship losing boats.
October	2nd	Chased by the French fleet. *Spartan* to seaward.
November	13th	At anchor off Barcelona. Blew up a fort, and took a French boat at night, rocketing the town of Barcelona.
„	15th	Engaging batteries at Barcelona, with shot and shells—ship much damaged ; one gun dismantled by a shot.
„	21st	Came to an anchor in the Bay of Kous.
„	22nd	French besieging the town of Rosas and Fort Trinity.
„	23rd	Landing troops and engaging batteries ; Spaniards repulsed, with loss—a master's mate and several men of *Fame* killed and wounded. *Fame* embarked marines from fort, not thinking it tenable.
„	24th	Landed and took possession of Trinity Castle. Enemy keeping up a constant fire on the castle and tower.
„	27th	Boats taking troops to the citadel.
„	30th	French stormed the castle—but were repulsed with loss of several men, scaling ladders, etc.
December	5th	The Spaniards capitulated, and surrendered the citadel to the French. Embarked our ship's company under cover of the *Fame* and *Magnificent*. Blew up the castle and spiked the guns. Total loss, five killed and twelve wounded.
„	30th	Warped the ship into harbour of Cadaques and took possession, after a short action, of the batteries, two men-of-war, and twelve sail laden with wheat.

1809

January	9th	Ran into Port Selda, drove French from the batteries, employed getting brass guns off—marines repulsed and embarked. One man made prisoner, five wounded—got off four brass guns.
„	20th	Engaging town of Sitges with shot and shell.
„	22nd	Firing at the French Army as they passed on the beach for six miles.

THOMAS, LORD COCHRANE
TENTH EARL OF DUNDONALD
Aetat 33
This portrait shows Lord Cochrane as Captain of the *Impérieuse*
By P. E. Stroehling

French Army than the whole of the remainder of the British fleet. But he was an unpopular man, and instead of being thanked for his eminent services he was found fault with for expending more sails, stores, gunpowder, and shot than had ever been used by any captain in the Service !

And in 1848, when the Naval General Service Medal was tardily given to the survivors of the crews of 804 ships and the crews of 540 boats which had taken part in the many fleet actions, single-ship engagements, and cutting out expeditions occurring between 1793 and 1840, the grant of the medal was not extended to the officers and men of the *Impérieuse* for their services in the Mediterranean. Such an omission is little short of surprising, but is probably accounted for by the fact that the butcher's bill was comparatively trifling.

As Marryat remarked in his journal : ' Many of the most brilliant achievements ' (Cochrane's) ' were performed without loss of a single life, so well did he calculate his chances ; and one half the merit which he deserves for what he did accomplish has never been awarded him, merely because in the official despatches there has not been a long list of killed and wounded to please the appetite of the English public.'

5

Marryat's next service in the *Impérieuse* was during the attack upon the French fleet in the Basque Roads, off Rochefort, in April, 1809.

Well aware of Cochrane's dashing bravery, energy, and his knowledge of the French coast, the Admiralty had despatched him in the *Impérieuse* to carry out an attack in a method severely condemned by the commander-in-chief. His selection for the task was perhaps the unluckiest incident in his life.

The full story of the affair has already been told.

Basque Roads, however, where Marryat served in one of the explosion-vessels and received a certificate for his good work, saw the end of the future novelist's more brilliant and picturesque experiences.

In the *Impérieuse*, under another captain, he took part in the mismanaged Walcheren expedition of the same year, but was invalided home with the prevalent marsh fever[1] on October

[1] ' Towards the middle of September, the average number of deaths was from two to three hundred a week, and nearly half the garrison was in hospital.' (Alison's *History of Europe*, Vol. VIII., p. 191.)

' The sick, returned at various times to England from Walcheren, amounted to 12,863.' (Parl. Papers, No. 24 ; Parl. Deb. XV. 23, App.)

19th. His illness does not appear to have been very serious, for in the same month he joined the *Centaur*, ordered to the Mediterranean as flagship of Sir Samuel Hood. He was a few months over seventeen years of age, and in just over three years of sea-time had seen sufficient fighting, and amassed sufficient experience, to last most men for a lifetime.

Marryat's quiet year in the *Centaur* in the Mediterranean was in distinct contrast to the eventful commission of the *Impérieuse*. No event of importance seems to have occurred, beyond his saving of the life of a seaman who had fallen overboard from the main-yard while the ship was cruising off Toulon. He returned to England from Cadiz in the *Atlas* on November, 1810, and, after a short spell of leave, joined the *Africa* on January 24th, 1811, for passage to the West Indies. It was from this ship, running down the Trades at a speed of seven knots, that he once more leapt overboard to save a shipmate. The attempt was unsuccessful, Marryat being nearly two miles astern of the ship and a full thirty minutes in the water before he was picked up.

From Bermuda, on April 18th, he took passage in the *Chub*, schooner, to Halifax, where, on July 5th, he joined the *Æolus*, Captain Lord James Townshend. After visiting Quebec and Prince Edward's Island, his new ship was ordered to cruise off New York, and it was here, on September 30th, that she was laid over on her beam ends during a furious gale, and remained in this perilous position for half an hour with her top-masts and mizzen-mast blown away. Directions were then given for the main-yard to be cut away from its slings to save the mainmast and to right the ship. So great was the danger, that not a man could be induced to go aloft until Marryat led the way. This is how he described it :

'I confess I felt gratified at this acknowledgment of a danger that none dared face. I waited for a few seconds to see if a volunteer would step forward, resolved, if he did, that I would be his enemy for life, inasmuch as he would have robbed me of the gratification of my darling passion—unbounded pride. Dangers, in common with others, I had often faced, and been the first to encounter, but to dare that which a gallant and hardy crew of a frigate had declined, was a climax of superiority which I had never dreamed of attaining. Seizing a sharp tomahawk, I made signs to the captain that I would attempt to cut away the wreck, follow me who dared. I mounted the weather rigging ; five or six hardy seamen followed me. Sailors will rarely refuse to follow when they

find an officer to lead the way. The jerks of the rigging had nearly thrown us overboard, or jammed up with the wreck. We were forced to embrace the shrouds with arms and legs; and anxiously, and with breathless apprehension for our lives, did the captain, officers, and crew gaze on us as we mounted, and cheered us at every stroke of the tomahawk. The danger seemed passed when we reached the cat-harpings where we had foot-room. We divided our work, some took the lanyards of the topmost rigging, I the slings of the main-yard. The lusty blows we dealt were answered by corresponding crashes, and at length, down fell the tremendous wreck over the larboard gunwale. The ship felt instant relief; she righted, and we descended amidst the cheers and congratulations of most of our shipmates.

'This was the proudest moment of my life,' he added, 'and no earthly possession would I have taken in exchange for what I felt when I once more placed my foot on the quarter-deck. The approving smile of the captain, the hearty shake by the hand, the praises of the officers, the eager gaze of the ship's company, who looked on me with astonishment and obeyed me with alacrity, were something, in my mind, when abstractedly considered, but nothing compared to the inward feeling of gratified ambition—a passion so intimately interwoven in my existence that, to have eradicated it, the whole fabric of my frame must have been demolished. I felt pride justified. . . .'

After saving the life of a boy, who had fallen overboard in Halifax harbour, he was transferred on November 17th, 1811, to the *Spartan*. The ship was commanded by Captain Edward Pelham Brenton who, in 1823, published his *The Naval History of Great Britain, from the years 1783 to 1822*, a book not altogether accurate which must have made him many enemies, and afterwards wrote a biography of the Earl of St. Vincent.

It was in the *Spartan* that Marryat acquired his knowledge of the West Indies which became so useful when he came to write his novels. Early in July, 1812, he had another taste of fighting when six American armed vessels were captured by the frigate's boats in a harbour in the Bay of Fundy. But it was tame enough compared with what he had already experienced.

Having served his time as midshipman, he left the *Spartan* on August 22nd, 1812, to take passage home in the *Indian*, and on October 7th was examined for the rank of lieutenant on board the *Gladiator* at Portsmouth. The examining captains at first withheld his certificate, 'he not having produced

in their opinion a satisfactory document of his age, although found qualified in every other respect.'

Marryat, apparently, had not been baptised according to the rites of the Established Church of England, and, in referring the case to the Admiralty, his examiners asked whether a certificate from a Doctor Williams, the registrar of a circulating library in Red Cross Street, Cripplegate, should be accepted as sufficient. The Admiralty replied that provided the examiners were satisfied with the authenticity of this document, supported as it was by an affidavit, they saw no objection.

Accordingly, on December 26th, 1812, at the age of twenty and a half, Marryat was promoted to lieutenant and ' shipped ' the newly-established insignia of his rank, a single epaulette on the right shoulder.

His periods of leave appear to have been infrequent and very curtailed, for on January 8th, 1813, he was appointed to the sloop *L'Espiégle*, ordered to the northern coast of South America. Precisely a month later, when running down the Trades in a very heavy sea, he again leapt overboard to save a man who had fallen from the main rigging. His gallant attempt was unsuccessful on account of the time it took the ship to bring to and lower a boat, and he was eventually picked up a mile and a half away, exhausted and practically insensible.

In *L'Espiégle* he visited Surinam, Demerara, and Barbadoes. While attending a ball at the last-named island, however, he broke a blood-vessel, and, being sent to the hospital at Halifax, returned to England in his old ship, the *Spartan*. This untimely accident was partly due to the constitutional ailment which eventually caused his death.

January 31st, 1814, saw his appointment to the *Newcastle*, Captain Lord George Stuart, again for service in North America. He assisted at the capture of various American privateers, and on December 19th commanded the *Newcastle's* barge and cut out four vessels from Boston Bay, a service in which he incurred a loss of eleven killed and wounded. But his health was bad, and in February 1815, he was again invalided home from Madeira. His promotion to commander followed on June 13th.

In the first nine and a half years of his sea service, up till the age of twenty-three, Marryat had seen many different parts of the world and much fighting. It is true that no great battle had come his way, not even a ship-to-ship action. But

what he lacked in the way of material he would have heard from the lips of others. Most of his captains and messmates had their stories to tell, and though as yet he seems to have had no idea of writing for the public, he heard their tales, stored them up in his retentive memory, and used them when the time came.

Moreover, he had been a lucky man. In those days of many lieutenants, numbers of whom spent their days languishing on their miserable half-pay, advancement to the rank of commander at the age of about twenty-three was no mean reward.

6

With the arrival of peace in 1815, Marryat, like many other Englishmen, went abroad to the Continent, where he seems to have remained for three years enjoying himself, learning foreign languages, and 'acquiring a perfect knowledge of such branches of service as might prove useful to him should the Lords of the Admiralty be pleased to employ him in any survey or voyage of discovery.'[1]

It was during this period that he invented a code of signals which was adopted in the mercantile marine of most of the important maritime powers, the French government ordering that no merchant ship could be insured unless she carried it. The code, to use a hackneyed phrase, 'filled a long-felt want,' and must have brought him in a regular income in royalties until he disposed of his rights in it.[2] In 1817, too, he received for its invention the formal thanks of a society of shipowners, and in 1833 was created an Officer of the Legion of Honour by Louis Philippe. Permission to wear the decoration, however, is said to have been refused by William IV, because Marryat had offended him by writing an official memorandum to the Admiralty, condemning the pressgang as a method of recruitment for the Navy.

It was in 1818 that he was awarded the gold medal of the Royal Humane Society 'for the saving of at least a dozen lives. . . . at the imminent hazard of his own,' and the year following was elected an F.R.S.

The chance of active service being over, Marryat played

[1] Marshall's *Naval Biography*, Vol. III., part i., p. 267.

[2] On parting eventually with the rights of his 'Signal Code,' presumably for a lump sum, he continued to receive a quarter of the profits, on condition that he added to or altered the flags as necessary. In the next year after this arrangement he received about £140 as his share. Previously he must have made considerably more.

with the idea of exploration, for in 1818 he was recalled from Italy to take part in an expedition to Central Africa. But nothing came of it, and in January 1819, he married Catherine, the second daughter of Sir Stephen Shairp, of Houston, Linlithgow, at one time Consul-General in Russia.

Of his early married life little has been made public, and on June 13th, 1820, he was appointed to the sloop *Beaver*, his first independent command. In this ship he proceeded on a cruise to the South Atlantic to show the flag at Madeira, the Azores, Tristan d'Acunha, and the British possessions at the Cape of Good Hope, whence he proceeded to St. Helena. Arriving there on March 7th, 1821, the *Beaver* was the last ship to cruise off the island to guard against any attempt at rescuing the captive Napoleon. The ex-Emperor died on June 5th, and Marryat, always clever with his pencil, made a sketch of the body, which was afterwards engraved and circulated in England and France.

He had been for some time away from his wife, and at this not inopportune moment, or shortly before, became a victim to dysentery and was allowed to exchange into the *Rosario*, which brought home the duplicate despatches announcing Napoleon's death. The ship arrived home in time to form part of the squadron which escorted the body of Queen Caroline from Harwich to Cuxhaven in August 1821, and was afterwards detailed to cruise against smugglers in the English Channel, until, in February 1822, she was paid off as unseaworthy.

As a result of this short spell of preventive service, which provided him with another parcel of material valuable for his books, Marryat wrote a long memorandum to the Admiralty on the prevention of smuggling. We are not told whether or not his suggestions were adopted for assisting to check the systematic trade in contraband which was then prevalent on all coasts from the Clyde to the Firth of Forth, but particularly in the English Channel.

In March 1823, after little more than a year ashore, he was appointed to the *Larne*, in which, accompanied by his wife, he sailed from Spithead for the East Indies on July 3rd. At Falmouth an absurd incident occurred which might quite well have ended his life. His gig, with him in it, capsized. An old bumboat woman and a midshipman were also on board, and the lady, who could swim like a fish, insisted on trying to save the captain, who could swim equally as well.

"Go to the boy—he can't swim!" exclaimed Marryat, trying to shake off his saviour.

"Go to the boy!" she flung back. "What! Hold up a midshipman when I can save the life of a captain! Not I, indeed!"

We are not told who did rescue the youngster; but nobody was drowned.

Arriving on her station on December 19th, Marryat found the *Larne* ordered to Burmah to co-operate with the troops under Sir Archibald Campbell in the war against Ava. Leaving his wife at Madras, he arrived at Rangoon in May 1824, and served off and on in the Irrawaddy until the autumn of 1825.

Sufficient troops had not been sent for the work in hand, and the operations dragged on for months in an unhealthy climate, with cholera, fever, and scurvy playing havoc with soldiers and sailors alike. The duties of the Navy were to free the river of Burmese war canoes, to transport troops, cover their landing, protect their flanks, and occasionally to assist in storming stockades or destroying hostile batteries, tasks which were trying and thankless enough. Marryat was transferred to the *Tees* on the death of Commodore Grant on July 25th, 1824. The change should have brought him his promotion, but for some reason his advancement was delayed for a year, by which time twenty-four other officers had passed over his head.

Arriving home again early in 1826, he paid off the *Tees* at Chatham, and the following January was created a C.B. for his services in Burmah, for which he had already received the thanks of the general in command and the Indian Government. At the same time, he was permitted to augment his family coat of arms by the representation of a Burmese war-boat and the word 'Ava,' and to bear a second crest, consisting of: 'on a wreath of the colours, a naval crown or, thereon a flagstaff with a Burmese naval pennon flowing therefrom proper, and an anchor in Saltire sable, united in the centre by a riband azure, and pendent therefrom a representation of the gold medal presented by the Royal Humane Society of London to the said Captain Marryat.'

His first book, *Frank Mildmay*, as already mentioned, was for the most part written between his paying off the *Tees* in 1826, and commissioning the *Ariadne* in November, 1828, and was published the following year. During his two years' service in the *Ariadne* he wrote *The King's Own*, which saw the light of day in 1830.

In November of that same year, Marryat's 'private affairs' induced him to resign his command. His daughter, Mrs.

Ross Church, assigns as his reason the fact that he had been appointed equerry to the Duke of Sussex, the King's brother, and wished to devote himself to his new duties. It is more probable, however, that, loving excitement as he did, the humdrum monotony of peace routine in the Navy had become irksome, particularly as it involved long absences from his wife and growing family. Also, as the author of two successful books, he probably saw better chances of making money as a free man ashore.

He did not long retain his post as equerry to the Duke of Sussex, and by the end of 1830 was living in Sussex House, Hammersmith, which he had bought from the Duke. Where the purchase money came from we are not told. In the same year, however, he seems to have sold it, and purchased an estate of about 1,000 acres, containing a manor house and two farms, at Langham, in Norfolk. Like many naval officers, Marryat had the idea that it was only necessary to possess land to become a successful farmer. Like them he was speedily disillusioned.

It was thus, in 1830, that he forsook service afloat and definitely took to his pen as a working man of letters.

7

Lack of precise information makes it difficult to follow Marryat's life during the next few years, and the biography written by his daughter leaves much unexplained and unaccounted for. Reading between the lines, however, one surmises that he was a man of expensive tastes who liked to live in a large way in the best sort of houses, that he was fond of speculation, rash in his investments, and full of wildcat schemes for making fortunes which never came to anything. He always found it difficult to live within his income, and his farming project at Langham, from the point of view of pounds, shillings, and pence, was certainly disastrous.

When the mood was upon him, he wrote furiously and for long periods at a stretch, without even taking sufficient exercise, which inevitably told upon his health. His books were first written on ruled foolscap, kept at one time in a little old blotting-book of black leather nearly worn out with use. His handwriting was so minute that it strained even his own eyesight to read it. We are told that only one compositor in London could decipher it, and that even he had to stick in a pin at the place he left off to ensure finding it again.

Until early in 1832, when he migrated to London and took up his residence at 38 St. James's Place, Marryat seems to have remained at Langham, busy with his farm and writing. *Newton Forster*, which appeared as a three volume novel in 1832, was first serialised, with various shorter pieces, in the *Metropolitan*. His work in that publication was paid for at the rate of sixteen guineas a sheet—probably the printer's 'sheet' of sixteen pages as set up in type. This approximates to four guineas for a thousand words.

On November 3rd of that year, Marryat wrote to Mr. Bentley from the United Service Club in London as to his undertaking the editorship of a new nautical magazine. It is an extremely businesslike letter, in which he stipulated for the sole control of the publication, the same rate of payment for his contributions as he received from the *Metropolitan*, and the sum of £400 a year, rising by two annual increments of £100 to a final £600, for his salary as editor.

But the idea came to nothing, for the end of 1832 found him installed as editor of the *Metropolitan Magazine*, which he remained for three years. During this period he was a busy editor with battles to fight, his circulation to watch, contributors to be spurred on and assuaged, and his own writing to do. Before the days of stenographers and typists, his work was certainly no sinecure.

Peter Simple, one of his best known novels, and a long one according to present ideas, was serialised at the usual rates in the *Metropolitan* during 1833, and appeared as a three volume book in the following year, the author receiving £1,100 on publication, presumably in advance of royalties at so much per cent. It was on the publication of this book that Marryat issued the statement on his work, portions of which have already been quoted.

In 1833, seized with parliamentary aspirations, he chose to stand as Liberal candidate at the Tower Hamlets. For reasons which need hardly be entered into here he was not returned, and, having spent a considerable sum of money, went first on a trip to Paris, and then to Brighton, where for some time he lived in a house called Montpelier Villa, in the Western Road.

Here, in 1834, working feverishly at his desk, he wrote *Jacob Faithful*, *Mr. Midshipman Easy*, and *Japhet in Search of a Father*, all of which duly appeared in the pages of the *Metropolitan Magazine*. Published as three volume novels, the first-named in 1834, and the others in 1836, he received £1,100 for the first and third, and £100 more for *Mr. Midshipman*

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Easy, probably in advance of royalties. £1,100 was also paid him on the publication of *The Pacha of Many Tales* in 1835.

The public interest displayed in these books, as they ran in monthly parts in the magazine, was considerable. It is stated that on an American meeting a British ship in mid-Atlantic she signalled, instead of a request for food or water, 'Has Japhet found his Father yet?'

Not quite everybody had read Marryat's books, however. Frederick Denison Maurice, 'the most gentle and visionary of religious philosophers,' wrote a novel called *Eustace Conway* and gave his villain the name of Captain Marryat! One morning, Maurice was waited upon by two gentlemen with a challenge from the real Marryat. Maurice's apology, though it may have turned away the irascible captain's wrath, can hardly have soothed his wounded feelings. 'Make my compliments to Captain Marryat,' he said, 'and express to him my regrets that my cloth forbids my accepting his challenge. I beg, moreover, that he will accept my sincere apologies for the inadvertent use which I have made of a name which, until to-day, was totally unknown to me.' This was in 1834, when Marryat had already made a reputation as the author of *Frank Mildmay*, *The King's Own*, and *Peter Simple*.

Marryat's father, who had been Member of Parliament for Sandwich since 1812, had died of apoplexy on January 12th, 1824. Ten years later, in 1834, there was a legal action in connection with his father's memory, for on April 1st, Marryat wrote to his mother from Brighton: 'As for the chancellor's judgment, I cannot say that I thought anything about it; on the contrary, it appears to me that he might have been more severe if he had thought proper. It is easy to impute motives, and difficult to disprove them. I thought, considering his enmity, that he let us off cheap; as there is no *punishing a chancellor*, and he might say what he pleased with impunity. I did not, therefore, *roar*, I only smiled. The effect will be nugatory. Not one in a thousand will read it; those who do, know it refers to a person not in this world, and of those, those who knew my father will not believe it; those who did not will care little about it, and forget the name in a week. Had he given the decision in our favour, I should have been better pleased, but *it's no use crying; what's done can't be helped.*'

Having given up his post as editor of the *Metropolitan Magazine* he went hurriedly off to the Continent with his wife and children in 1835. 'Not one day was our departure postponed,' he wrote. 'With post-horses and postilions, we posted, post-haste,

to Brussels.' We are left to imagine that he went abroad to economise.

At Brussels and at Spa he still continued his work for the *Metropolitan*, producing ' The Diary of a Blasé,' a journal of his continental travels, which subsequently appeared in *Olla Podrida*, a book of fugitive pieces, published in 1840. In the same year, 1835, he wrote *The Pirate and the Three Cutters*, for which, on publication a year later, with illustrations by the well-known marine artist Clarkson Stanfield and a frontispiece of himself, he received the sum of £750.

At the end of 1835 and beginning of 1836 he was in England for some months winding up his connection with the *Metropolitan Magazine*, the publishers of which, Messrs. Saunders and Ottley, could not see their way to grant him an advance for future work. It was now that he parted with his proprietary interest in the magazine for £1,050, and also arranged to write a biography of the late Lord Napier, who had been his friend and shipmate in the *Impérieuse*. Lady Napier had given the necessary permission and facilities, but, when the book was half completed, changed her mind, thereby wasting some precious months of Marryat's work.

Back in Belgium again in February 1836, he wrote *Snarley Yow, or the Dog Fiend*, for which, on his own statement, he received good terms on its publication as a book in 1837.

It was about now, however, that he came to the conclusion that he must break fresh ground. Literary people were writing successful and lucrative books about America, and it was to America that Marryat decided he also must go. He left his family at Lausanne, and, having concluded an agreement with *The New Monthly* to publish his writings for ' one year certain,' at twenty guineas a sheet, sailed for America in the *Quebec* on April 3rd, 1837, arriving at New York on May 4th.

In the first eight years of his literary life Marryat had utilised his naval experience to the full and was an industrious writer. He was fortunate as well, for he came in on the crest of the wave, at a period when the taste of the public for novel reading had already been whetted by the work of Sir Walter Scott. The time was ripe for writers of originality and humour, and industry with the pen, coupled with ability, brought its own reward. In his earlier books of the sea, he broke comparatively new ground. He was working in a new field without a serious competitor, though, like all successful writers, he had a score of imitators.

Whatever crudities in style and grammar his works may

show, their originality and humour are undeniable. Even his absurdest and most improbable drolleries never seem to strain the credulity of his readers. His books have been criticised for their faulty construction and lack of plot, and also for the artificiality of his feminine characters. This criticism may be deserved, for Marryat was at his best in descriptive narrative when dealing with the subjects he had at his fingers' ends, ships and the sea.

Some of the outstanding passages in his earlier naval books take their place among the finest sea descriptions in the English language. Written with an economy of words and a simple sincerity, they compel those who read them to visualise the scenes in all their stark nakedness, to be convinced that Marryat was describing what he himself had seen. He never strove to force an impression, and even in his tensest moments his language, though picturesque, was restrained and natural. And the impression was achieved.

As a true picture of life in the Navy in the early nineteenth century his naval novels stand unsurpassed. I doubt very much if he realised he was writing history, or that the best of his works would be published and re-published, read and re-read, until they could justly be considered as classics.

But if he had written no other books than *Frank Mildmay*, *The King's Own*, *Peter Simple*, and *Mr. Midshipman Easy*, all of which appeared before his departure for America in 1837,[1] Marryat would still be read to-day and his work would still be recognised as that of a master in his own particular style of sea novel.

8

Though his books were sufficiently well-known and appreciated in America, Marryat, on first landing there, was received with reserve, if not coolness. The newspapers made their usual comments, not always in the best of taste. The people, generally, saw in him another member of that tribe of egregious British authors who, from time to time, had visited America for the avowed object of writing books to display American weaknesses in the country whence they had originally sprung. Previous writings had offended their national pride and susceptibilities, and not without reason. Toleration and condescension they abhorred, so it is little to be wondered at that they

[1] Up till Marryat's departure for America *The Pacha of Many Tales* had sold 1,196 copies ; *Mr. Midshipman Easy*, 1,548, and *Japhet in Search of a Father*, 1,468.

were inclined to regard Marryat as a spy who had come out to make fun of them and to criticise.

Soon after his arrival he visited his mother's relatives at Boston, and at New York, on Independence Day, July 4th, dined with the mayor and corporation of that city. He also wrote a nautical drama—*The Ocean Wolf; or, The Channel Outlaw*—which was staged at a New York theatre and well received.

A tour of the lakes followed. In the intervals of sightseeing and collecting material for his intended *Diary in America*, he was busy writing *The Phantom Ship*, together with a shorter tale called *Ralph Restless*, and some articles afterwards reprinted in *Olla Podrida*. *The Phantom Ship* appeared serially in England in the *New Monthly Magazine* in 1837 and 1838, to be published as a book a year later.

In those days, when there was no copyright law between the two countries, any American publisher was legally entitled to reprint without payment the work of any foreign author which was likely to interest his public. Marryat, however, while fighting against this wholesale 'piracy,' did persuade one American firm to take proof-sheets of *The Phantom Ship* and *A Diary in America* a month before they appeared in England, for which they were to pay him the sum of 2,250 dollars, with another 250 dollars provided nobody else published the works in America within thirty days of the date they issued it from their press. It is to be hoped that he duly received the full sum of 2,500 dollars, or approximately £500, and so was able to make good a portion of the expenses incurred during his trip.

In April 1838, writing from New York, he said: 'I have finished *The Phantom Ship*, but I shall publish no more for some time—not till I return, probably, if my finances will hold out till that time. I have written too fast, and wish the public to wait for me, to prove that I am not their servant or dependent upon them.'

After visiting Niagara Falls he went on to Toronto. Canada at the time was in a ferment, caused by an insurrection on the part of the French Canadians. Many Americans were helping the insurgents, and on December 29th, 1837, an American steamer called the *Caroline*, which had been chartered and fitted out by the rebels, had been cut out with great gallantry, after sharp fighting, from under the guns of Fort Schlosser, on the American side of the Niagara River, by a party of Canadian volunteers under Lieutenant Drew. After capturing the ship

and removing the crew, the Canadians sent her over Niagara Falls. The incident, regarded by the loyalist Canadians with pride, created considerable bad feeling in America.

Invited to a public dinner at Toronto, Marryat was asked to make a speech. He did so, and naturally took the opportunity of proposing the toast of 'Captain Drew and his brave comrades who cut out the *Caroline*.' Little did he realise the storm of abuse that his perfectly innocent remarks were to raise about his head when he returned to finish his tour in America.

The Press throughout the American continent opened with a chorus of wild invective and childish fulmination. Handbills and circulars headed 'MORE INSOLENCE ! ! !' were displayed in towns and villages, while copies of Marryat's books were solemnly burnt in bonfires. And he himself, as he travelled through the country, was pursued, as he afterwards said in a speech, 'with fire, and faggot, or hemp . . . every indignity poured upon my head, every invective poured out upon my name. . . . I have latterly had the honour of being burnt in effigy and hung up at every town through which I passed, and reviled by almost every paper in the Union.'

'I shall be tarred and feathered before I get out of the country,' he wrote to his mother on May 11th, 1838.

But whatever his real feelings, he suffered the storm of vilification with the greatest composure—speaking smoothly to the deputations of angry citizens who waited upon him demanding to know why he had dared to insult God's own country, treating the burning of his effigy and books more or less as jokes. And at Cincinnati, where a public dinner had been arranged in his honour, he made a speech full of manly commonsense which appealed to the sense of justice innate in his audience, and made them his friends.

It is too long to be quoted in full ; but reminding his listeners of what had occurred, he said that the offence given to a portion of the American people was as unintentional on his part as it was captious on theirs to suppose that any insult was intended. He little imagined, when he drank to the health of an old shipmate, that he was going to create a whirlwind of indignation throughout a vast continent. In replying to the toast of the Royal Navy he had merely toasted, on St. George's Day, and in Canadian territory, the latest naval achievement which had occurred a few miles away. The *Caroline*, he added, had been chartered, manned, and armed by rebels, had fired first upon the British boat, and was defended by the rebels

to the best of their ability. Further, when he had been present as a guest at a public dinner in New York on Independence Day, his hosts had not hesitated to drink to the battles of Bunker's Hill and New Orleans, and to make speeches in which England and Englishmen were referred to with more acrimony than good taste. After more remarks, in which he observed he wished for nothing but friendship and good feeling between the two countries, and that he, personally, bore no ill-will for what had taken place, he concluded by saying, 'Feeling that I am now before a conscientious jury, I now ask of you your verdict—Guilty, or Not Guilty?'

The reply, we are told, was a deafening shout of 'Not Guilty.'

Many a lesser man than Marryat would have avoided that dinner on the plea of ill-health. But he, with his customary pluck, bearded the lions in their den and triumphed.

Nevertheless, he still continued to be pestered by insults, frequently in unpaid letters. And at last, in October, 1838, he wrote a long protest against his treatment to the *Louisville Journal*, merely to receive an offensive reply.

Canada still seethed with trouble. The rebels had gained various preliminary successes, which induced Marryat, as an officer still upon the active list, to volunteer his services to Sir John Colborne. His services being accepted, he took part in an expedition resulting in the total defeat of the insurgents.

'I little thought when I wrote last,' he said in a letter to his mother on December 18th, 'that I should have had the bullets whizzing about my ears again so soon. It has been a sad scene of sacrilege, murder, burning, and destroying. All the fights have been in the churches, and they are now burnt to the ground and strewed with the wasted bodies of the insurgents. War is bad enough, but civil war is dreadful. Thank God, it is all over.'

Returning to New York in January 1839, he found there was every prospect of hostilities between Great Britain and America. Abandoning for the time all idea of further writing, and deciding against returning to Canada, where he could hope for nothing better than a command on the lakes, he made up his mind to return to England.

Passages from a letter written to his mother at this period are significant as showing he was anxious to get back into the Navy and to finish with writing, for good and all.

'If I were once in Canada, and war broke out, I should be shut up there till May, by which time all the ships would be

given away in England, and I should either have to take a lake command or none, and I infinitely prefer a man-of-war on the ocean. . . . Mr. Howard[1] writes me in very bad spirits. He says that I am much injured by remaining away from England, and my popularity is on the wane. I laugh at that ; it is very possible people will be ill-natured while I am not able to defend myself ; but what I have done they cannot take from me, and if I wrote no more, I have written quite enough. If I were not rather in want of money I certainly would not write any more, for I am rather tired of it. I should like to disengage myself from the fraternity of authors, and be known in future only in my profession as a good officer and seaman.'

He was back in England early in 1839, after an absence of nearly two years, and, visiting Paris to see his wife and children, brought them home and settled down at 8 Duke Street, St. James's.

The war clouds had definitely blown over, and Marryat, therefore, missed his chance of active employment at sea. Instead, he remained ashore busy with his pen, compelled to write because, in his own words, he was 'rather in want of money.'

For his *Diary in America*, which was published in two parts, each of three volumes, in England, in 1839, and made him immensely unpopular in the United States, he received the sum of £1,600 as a first payment.

9

Settled for a few months in Duke Street, St. James's, with his wife and family, Marryat set himself to work upon *Poor Jack*, which, with drawings by Clarkson Stanfield,[2] appeared as a book in 1840.

By September 1839, however, he was living at Wimbledon House, which had belonged to his father and was still occupied by his mother. He seems always to have been insatiable as a curio-hunter, and to have bought anything that took his fancy. There was hardly a room, we are told, that was not decorated with something or other brought from abroad, from a Burmese shrine with silver idols rifled from a pagoda, the carved tusks of a sacred elephant, an opossum skin from Canada embroidered with porcupine quills and coloured beads, to a stuffed

[1] Mr. Howard, the author of *Rattlin the Reefer*, had been Marryat's nautical sub-editor on the staff of the *Metropolitan Magazine*. He was apparently looking after Marryat's literary interests in England during his sojourn in America.

[2] The well-known marine and landscape painter (1793–1867).

black bear with silver claws, many furs, toys in tortoiseshell and ivory, curious shells, and two hundred precious stones. The result must have been sufficiently distressing.

The precious stones had been collected during the war in Burmah, when Marryat had discovered that the Burmans were in the habit of making incisions in their arms or legs, inserting their jewels, and then allowing the flesh to heal up over the wounds. After any engagement he accordingly caused his men to pass their hands over the corpses. If a lump was felt, a cut with a knife soon relieved the owner of his now useless geegaw.

But not a single one of his curios, some of which were valuable, and only one jewel, a yellow diamond set in a ring, passed down to his children when he died. The rest he gave away from time to time to those of his friends who fancied them. On leaving his rooms in Duke Street, too, which were crammed with very expensive furniture, he was asked if it should be sold.

"Sold," he replied. "No! Not worth it—get nothing at all! I shall send them to S——. He will find a use for them!"

So a huge furniture van, laden with beds, wardrobes, chairs, and sofas, descended from the blue upon a struggling artist living in a minute house in the suburbs. The recipient was astonished, but duly grateful; though not a thing except the chairs could be got in through his front door.

These indiscriminate and spontaneous acts of generosity, appropriate enough in a millionaire, were rather out of place in a man who had to provide for himself and his numerous family by his pen, and who, in 1844, described himself as looking twice at a shilling before he parted with it, and pocketing coppers with complacency.

At this period, indeed, Marryat, who had accustomed himself to the best of everything and to an extravagant way of living, was very hard hit financially. The money for his books was probably spent as he received it. His investments or speculations had been failures, and most of his father's considerable fortune, invested in the West Indies, what with competition, Free Trade, and the abolition of slavery, had gone the way of many other people's.

He liked to entertain lavishly, and, as Mrs. Ross Church says, 'many literary ladies and others of note and distinction honoured his rooms with their presence.' He numbered among his close friends such well-known people as Clarkson

Stanfield, Charles Dickens, Harrison Ainsworth, and John Forster. Sheridan, Rogers, Campbell, and Blomefield were among his many acquaintances. But, 'like most warm-hearted people,' as his daughter put it, he 'was quick to take offence, and no one could have decided, after an absence of six months, with whom he was friends and with whom he was not.'

The continuance of his literary work was forced upon him by circumstances—the necessity for making money. If the truth be told, it was little to his taste, for he had exhausted most of his available sea material, and was beginning to feel 'written out.' None of his later books, with the exception, perhaps, of *Masterman Ready*, can compare with *Peter Simple* or *Mr. Midshipman Easy*.

Joseph Rushbrook; or, The Poacher," published as a book in 1841, and for which he was paid £400 in anticipation of two-thirds of the profits, was serialised in *The Era*, a newspaper. Its appearance there created a little storm, and Marryat, with Harrison Ainsworth, who had published his *Tower of London* in monthly parts in a magazine, was severely taken to task for lack of self-respect and 'pitiful peddling.' Quick to take up the cudgels on his own behalf, he wrote a long letter of protest to *Fraser's Magazine*, in which the criticism had appeared.

He found life with his mother at Wimbledon 'triste and dull,' and early in 1841, he moved to rooms at 120 Pall Mall and was at work upon *Masterman Ready*, which, like others of his books, was translated into French and German. Some of them had even found their way into Spanish and Swedish.

His health, however, was beginning to suffer, and on February 13th he wrote to a Mrs. S——,[1] 'a lady for whom, to the time of his death, he retained the highest sentiments of friendship and esteem': 'I am much worse than I have made myself out in my former letters. I fell down as if I had been shot, a few days ago, and have been ever since obliged to be very quiet, and am not permitted to drink anything but water, or undergo the least excitement, and you would offer me every description in the shape of mirth, revelry, and beauty, putting yourself out of the question. No, for my sins, sins in the shape of three volumes chiefly, and heavy sins too, I must now submit to mortification and penance. I am positively forbidden to write a line. . . . I have been amusing myself with drawing all the illustrations myself, and they will do very well.' He referred, of course, to the illustrations for *Masterman Ready*.

[1] *Life and Letters of Captain Marryat*, by Florence Marryat (Mrs. Ross Church).

FREDERICK MARRYAT

Aetat 48

From a pencil drawing by d'Orsay

Soon afterwards he moved to 3 Spanish Place, Manchester Square, where, surrounded by his friends—'Lady Blessington, Lady Morgan, Lady Stepney, Charles Dickens, Harrison Ainsworth, George Cruikshank, Alfred D'Orsay, John Forster, Sir E. B. Lytton, Edwin Landseer, Clarkson Stanfield, and many others of equal celebrity'[1]—he gave up writing for a time. 'It was here that, in the tiniest of houses, furnished according to his own taste, a very gem in point of its adornments—rich in pictures and *objets d'art*, clothed in velvet and decorated with hot-house flowers—he received visitors who made the little rooms brilliant with their conversation and wit.'[1]

The first volume of *Masterman Ready* appeared in 1841, and the second and third a year later. *Percival Keen*, written in 1841, appeared also in 1842. It was about now, however, that Marryat found himself longing for a quiet life, and in 1843, cutting himself off from his London friends, settled again at Langham Manor.

The house and estate were in a woeful state of disrepair and neglect when he returned. The drawing-room had been fitted up by his tenant with rows of bunks, which were let out to tramps at twopence a night, while the birds had been allowed to roost in the boudoir. The land, too, had had everything taken out of it and nothing put in.

The disgusted owner promptly set about making alterations and improvements. Clad in a velveteen shooting coat, mud-bespattered 'high-lows,' and a shocking bad hat, he rode round his little estate on his corpulent, cream-coloured pony, appropriately called 'Dumpling,' superintending the erection of model cottages and pigstyes, and watching his men draining a covert, or flooding some acres of meadow-land to form a lake for decoying wild duck, which were to be shot and supplied to the London market. But few of the money-making schemes, except the wild duck idea, which produced 5,000 birds a year until Marryat decided again to drain the lake, ever came to anything. And both cottagers and pigs preferred their old insanitary habitations to the 'model' homes so thoughtfully provided for them.

In Mrs. Ross Church's book we have a good word-picture of Marryat at about this period. He was upright and broad-shouldered, about five feet ten inches in height; not handsome, but distinctly prepossessing in appearance. He had a firm,

[1] *Life and Letters of Captain Marryat*, by Florence Marryat (Mrs. Ross Church), Vol. II., pp. 114, 115.

decisive mouth, and massive forehead, the severity of his face being relieved by the humorous twinkle of his blue-grey eyes. His eyebrows were not alike, one being higher than the other and more arched, which gave his face a look of enquiry, even when it was in repose. There was a deep cleft in his upper lip, and in his chin a deep dimple, which made shaving, frequently done twice a day on account of his heavy growth of beard, a matter of some difficulty. As a young man, his hair had been abundant, dark and curly. Now, at the age of fifty-one, it was grey and long, almost down to his shoulders. His hands were small, well-shaped, and well-cared for, and he was always immaculate as regards his linen. Affecting a sober style of dress in London, he cared little how he was attired in the country. The clothes he wore riding about his estate on 'Dumpling' would have been scorned by a well-to-do tramp.

In the company of other people, with new subjects under discussion, Marryat was as gay and as amusing as anybody. With his own family, however, he was usually thoughtful and grave. A man of quick temper, his manner was sometimes brusque and alarming, and during his occasional fits of depression it was dangerous to thwart him.

He could be charming when he chose, particularly with children, and though hardly a good disciplinarian, was a good father to his own, caring little what mischief they got into provided they told the truth. He never allowed anything to be locked away from them, and, when a governess eventually arrived at Langham, much to his young people's annoyance, he rather constituted himself their ally against her hated authority. He kept a supply of small presents in his desk, and at the end of each week the governess presented herself in the library with the children to make her report. Those who had behaved well were given a prize for being good, and those who had been naughty were similarly rewarded as an incentive to be better in the future. The governess also was presented with a little gift, so that she could not question the justice of the transaction.

The governess had instituted a system of fines and extra work for the tearing of clothes, which was almost of daily occurrence. The punishments became rather heavy, and one of Marryat's small daughters, having torn a new frock, rushed to him in distress to ask what should be done. Her father took hold of the tear and ripped off the whole lower part of the child's skirt.

"Tell her I did it," he said.

What the governess said we do not know.

Extracts from one letter, written to his sister-in-law in November, 1843, when one of his sons, a midshipman, was home on leave, are worth quoting as showing the trials of a busy author. 'I have been very much occupied and bothered these last few weeks. Frank came down here with Augusta and Emily[1] about four weeks back, and will remain, I presume, about the same time, when I hope he will be appointed to a ship. . . . Like all midshipmen, he turns the house upside down, and very much disturbs the economy and well regulating of a family. I shall not be able to do much with his sisters until he is gone, as anything serious is out of the question. However, midshipmen do not remain long on shore, so, at present, I submit to it, although he ought to be always followed by a housemaid with a broom to sweep up after him, and a carpenter to repair damages.'

Marryat's faults, as one of his closest friends once said, were the result of an over-active mind which could never be still. If he had nobody to cherish, he quarrelled for lack of something better to do. He planned for himself and everybody around him, changing his mind ten times a day. His restlessness of spirit would have worn out the body of a man less vigorous. Seized with ideas in the middle of the night, he would rush to his brother's bedroom, full of schemes of making rapid fortunes by buying a castle in Hungary, or camping out for three years somewhere in the desert.

In this pen-portrait we can see a man beset with anxiety, worried to make two ends meet, having to write without really wishing to, rather fearful for the future. And, for some reason that we do not know, and do not care to pry into, Mrs. Marryat had not accompanied her husband and the children to Langham. It was nothing discreditable on either side, but in May 1844, he mentions being much distressed by some 'unfortunate affair.' Precisely what it was, Mrs. Ross Church does not inform us.

Marryat tried hard to be a successful farmer, but failed. Here are the figures of his accounts for two years at Langham :

1842.	Total receipts . .	£154 2*s.* 9*d.*
„	Expenditure . . .	£1,637 0*s.* 6*d.*
1846.	Total receipts . .	£898 12*s.* 6*d.*
„	Expenditure . . .	£2,023 10*s.* 8*d.*

[1] Two of his daughters.

Meanwhile, with his dogs at his feet—'Zinny,' the King Charles spaniel, and 'Juno,' the Italian greyhound, with 'Ben Brace,' his favourite bull, tethered outside his study window; with the children, strolling in and out of the room, asking questions and occasionally to be expelled with "Cease your prattle, my child, and leave the room,"—we must imagine him sitting at his desk, driving away at his books, in the intervals of prowling round his farm and estate.

The Travels and Adventures of Monsieur Violet, popularly regarded as a book for children, came out in 1843. It was based upon the travels in America of a young Frenchman named Lasalle, who stayed at Langham, and seems rather to have scandalised the neighbourhood by performing Indian war-dances, lassoing horses, and other wild feats more suited to the wilds of Texas or California than to a quiet English village.

10

The next book, *The Settlers in Canada*, published in June, 1844, was admittedly a book for children. The *Athenæum*, which had always been inclined to attack Marryat's work, criticised it sharply, describing its author as 'a quarter-deck captain who defies critics, and trifles with the public, writing carelessly and not even good English, taking it for granted that his public are to read' just what he chose to write. The verdict was unnecessarily severe.

The Mission, or Scenes in Africa appeared in 1845. It was composed, as Marryat said in a letter, 'of scenes and descriptions of Africa in a journey to the northward from the Cape of Good Hope—full of lions and rhinoceroses, and all manner of adventures, interspersed with a little common sense here and there, and interwoven with the history of the settlement of the Cape up to 1828.'

It was about now that he was asked to undertake a short life of Collingwood on the lines of Southey's *Nelson*. 'I should like to write about Collingwood,' he wrote, replying to the suggestion, 'but if I were to write it in anything like a stipulated time I should not do it well. Biography is most difficult writing, and requires more time and thought than any original composition, and if I take it up I must be as free as air.'

Again: 'I have recently taken to a different style of writing, that is, for young people. My former productions, like all novels, have had their day, and for the present, at least, will sell no more, but it is not so with *juveniles*; they have an annual

demand, and become *a little income* to me ; which I infinitely prefer to receiving any sum in a mass, which very soon disappears somehow or other.'

In July and August 1845, he was writing some short tales and sketches for his friend Harrison Ainsworth, who had bought the *New Monthly*. His London friends were coaxing him to return thither. But he refused all their blandishments, and set to work on *The Privateer's Man*, which came out serially in Harrison Ainsworth's magazine, and as a two-volume book in 1846.

Simultaneously, Marryat seems also to have been writing *Mademoiselle Virginie* for the same journal, though before its appearance the title was changed to *Valérie*. His fatal illness came on before the book was finished and while it was still being published serially. Completed by another hand, it was printed as a two-volume book in 1849.

During the year 1846, Marryat used what leisure he could snatch from his farming in writing *The Children of the New Forest* and *The Little Savage*. He managed to complete the first, which was published in two volumes in the ' Juvenile Library ' in 1847. Of the two portions of *The Little Savage*, however, published in 1848-9, only the first part and the first two chapters of the second were written by Marryat himself.

The year 1847 saw him still worried over his farm, which occupied most of his time and absorbed much money. That same summer, however, the disease which terminated in his death was making rapid progress.

In those days there was no hard and fast scheme of retirement for naval officers, and Marryat, though he had been unemployed for seventeen years, was still upon the active list and drawing half-pay. For some time, weary of the drudgery of writing and of trying to make two ends meet ashore, he had been applying to the Admiralty for an active command at sea. To his bitter disappointment his applications were unsuccessful.

In July 1847, he had an interview with Lord Auckland, the First Lord of the Admiralty, with a view to obtaining an appointment. His request was refused, possibly with dry official formality. His nerves at the time were upset and his health bad. Unable to vent his bitter disappointment and to give way to his feelings before so high a functionary as the First Lord, he broke a blood-vessel soon after leaving his presence, which kept him on a bed of sickness for six or seven weeks. It was a recurrence of the old constitutional ailment which had troubled him as a young man, and as the local Norfolk doctor was not considered capable of treating his

case successfully, Marryat was persuaded to go to London for a second opinion. He stayed there for two months, living in his mother's home at Wimbledon.

On December 14th, 1847, he wrote again to Lord Auckland from Wimbledon. 'Your Lordship's reception was so mortifying to me,' he said in the opening paragraph, 'that, from excitement and annoyance, after I left you I ruptured a blood vessel, which has now for nearly five months laid me on a bed of sickness.' Continuing, he went on to mention that officers of the same seniority and service as himself had received appointments, and that he could only imagine his application was refused because there was something against him.' 'Since the total wreck of West India property,' he concluded, 'I shall have little to leave my children but a good name, which, on their account, is doubly precious.'

Lord Auckland, three days later, wrote a courteous reply, in which he said he had had no thought of wounding Marryat's feelings at their interview, and assured him that his record at the Admiralty was a very good one. As a vacancy had recently occurred, he had great pleasure in naming him for a good service pension. From the Navy Estimates for 1848–9, I discover that this pension was for the usual £150 a year, a sum worth practically double what it is now.

At the close of 1847, on the advice of his doctors, Marryat went for a couple of months to Hastings, where he lived in lodgings in Wellington Square.

In the previous June there had been an announcement in the *Gazette* that the Queen had been graciously pleased to command that a medal should be struck to record the services of Her Fleets and Armies during the wars beginning in 1793 and ending in 1815. Marryat had evidently been in communication on the subject with his old friend Sir Alexander Gordon, for while staying at Hastings he received a reply to say that he would probably be awarded the medal for his services in the *Impérieuse* at Basque Roads in 1809.[1]

[1] It is curious to think that the least important of the *Impérieuse's* services was eventually rewarded by the grant of the Naval General Service Medal, while her previous work on the coast of Spain went unrecognised. The medals were not ready for issue until January 1849, by which time Marryat was dead. As they were granted only to *surviving officers and men*, his family would not have received it.

For his services in Burmah, 1824–5, Marryat, had he lived, would also have been entitled to the 'India Medal, 1799–1826,' with clasp for 'AVA.' This medal, with its pale blue riband, was sanctioned in 1851 for the *surviving officers and men* of both Services, and of the East India Company, who took part in the various Indian wars within the period mentioned.

At Hastings, Marryat's health improved, so much so that hopes were entertained of his recovery. But whatever chance he had was ruthlessly swept aside at the end of the year by the shock of hearing of his eldest son's death in the steam frigate *Avenger*. The ship struck a coral reef between Galita Island and the mainland at 10 p.m. on December 20th, 1847. It was blowing hard with a heavy sea, and in a few minutes the vessel was a wreck. Lieutenant Marryat, a gallant and high-spirited young officer, was last seen forward shortly before the mainmast went by the board, carrying with it the funnel and killing several men.

Weakened as he was by months of illness, the terrible news hastened Marryat's death. In February 1848, he left Hastings for Brighton, remaining there for a month and then returning to London to see his doctor. He had apparently made light of his condition to his friends, for on March 6th Charles Dickens wrote to suggest : ' If you be within reach, let us foregather, and bring old Stanfield from his saints and missals to join us.'

But Marryat's days of enjoyment were gone for ever. He again interviewed his doctor, while some of his children waited in another room to hear the verdict. And presently he came back, his face undisturbed and half-smiling.

" They say," he calmly told them, " that in six months I shall be numbered with my forefathers."

He returned at once to Langham, living, as he said in one of the last letters he wrote, upon lemonade only until he ' was reduced to a little above nothing.' The total abstinence from solid food, necessitated by his disease, brought weakness and semi-starvation—death by slow degrees.

The illness culminated in atrophy. He became gradually weaker, his mind frequently wandering in delirium, during which he dictated whole pages of some chimerical book that ran through his brain. In the somnolent state produced by constant doses of morphia, he held long conversations with Dickens and others of his old friends and shipmates, whom he imagined to be present at his bedside.

Through the long hours of the summer of 1848 he lay upon a mattress placed on the floor in the boudoir. Without occupation, almost in darkness, often in pain, he lay there uncomplaining, gradually wasting away. In his lucid moments his daughters read aloud to him. Each morning they brought him a bunch of freshly-picked flowers. Moss roses and clove pinks were his favourites.

The end came at dawn on August 9th, when his housekeeper,

who was watching beside him, heard him murmur a sentence of the Lord's Prayer. He sighed. A shiver passed through his body, and a moment later his spirit fled.

His age was fifty-six.

Carried to the grave by his own farm servants, his remains lie in a vault in Langham churchyard. In the little church near by is a white marble tablet bearing his name, together with that of two of his sons—Frederick, lost in the *Avenger* in 1847, and Frank, who survived his father only by seven years. His other two boys, Norman and William, had died in 1823 and 1826.

With the death of Frank, in 1855, vanished the last chance of the novelist's name being handed down to posterity. Frank had inherited some of his father's talent for writing. Starting life in the Royal Navy, he had written an interesting account of the four years' surveying cruise in Borneo of H.M.S. *Samarang*, and, retiring after his parent's death, went abroad to California, and afterwards published a travel book called *Mountains and Molehills*, which achieved some popularity.

Captain Marryat was survived by his widow and five of his seven daughters, one of whom, Florence, born at Brighton in 1837, married first, Colonel Ross Church, and, on his death, Colonel Francis Lean of the Royal Marines. 'Florence Marryat,' to call her by her pen-name, wrote various novels, as well as the biography of her father, published in 1872, from which we have freely quoted. Known also as a dramatic reader and critic, she was editor of *London Society* between 1872 and 1876. She died in London on October 27th, 1899.

II

We have said enough to give an idea of Marryat's great qualities as a naval officer and a man, and also of his failings. As a writer and a novelist, however, he seems never to have been quite fairly treated, and there are some who would still condemn his work for the same reason as did the unknown critic of the *Athenæum* in 1844.

But though, and perhaps justly, he is denied a place in the very first rank of English novelists, he occupies a very high position. The best of his books may be read and re-read with pleasure and amusement.

Those of us who go down to the sea in ships, moreover, can see the simple truth in his descriptions of life and experiences afloat, for though ships may change, the character of seamen

has altered very little, and the sea not at all. If we are lucky, we may even meet the rather more sober-minded modern counterparts of those rollicking figures who march so irresistibly through the pages of *Peter Simple* and *Mr. Midshipman Easy*. Would to heaven that some of us could present the twentieth century Navy as Marryat did the Navy of a hundred years ago !

His children's books, except for *Masterman Ready* and *Children of the New Forest*, which have become juvenile classics, are hardly on the same plane as his nautical works. But all his work was simple, unaffected, and manly. It was honest, too. His characters flew into passions with each other and made it up again, were alternately joyful and depressed, just as he was himself. His books had little plot and no great subtlety. Their construction might be loose, the style sometimes faulty, the female characters unconvincing ; but, as one eminent critic said of their author, ' He has a frank, dashing genius, and splashes about the water in fine style.'

If permanence is any criterion, Marryat was certainly a great writer. Of all the many naval authors of the first half of the nineteenth century his books alone have been printed and re-printed, so that his work still entertains thousands. It is no exaggeration to say that Peter Simple, Mr. Chucks, O'Brien, Jack Easy, Captain Wilson, Mr. Biggs, and little Tommy Seagrave in *Masterman Ready*, to mention a few of his characters, are as well known in their particular way as Mr. Pickwick, Sam Weller, and Oliver Twist.

Messrs. J. M. Dent and Sons, who publish a collected edition of his works, together with nine selected volumes in their ' Everyman's Library,' inform me that the sales of the latter have been very steady for the past thirteen years, and that *Mr. Midshipman Easy* and *Children of the New Forest* are easily the best sellers of the nine.

It must have been twenty years ago that I heard a naval officer ask a newly-joined cadet—a cadet, if I may say so, with a character not unlike one of Marryat's own young officers —what had caused him to join the Royal Navy.

" Please, sir," piped the boy. " I think I read *Peter Simple*."

Comment is superfluous.

CHRONOLOGICAL LIST OF CAPTAIN MARRYAT'S WORKS, AND DATES OF THEIR PUBLICATION AS BOOKS.

NOTE.—The prices shown are the sums paid, where known, on publication as books. The royalties payable and earned on the later volumes have not been made public, nor the sums made on serial publication in the *Metropolitan* and other magazines. As Mrs. Ross Church says in the biography of her father, 'Captain Marryat did make large sums by his writings—by the most popular of which, alone, he realised a fortune of £20,000.' The net total earned in the eighteen years of his writing life must have been considerably more.

		£
Adventures of a Naval Officer; or Frank Mildmay	1829	400
The King's Own	1830	
Newton Forster	1832	
Peter Simple	1834	1,100
Jacob Faithful	1834	1,100
Pacha of Many Tales	1835	1,100
Mr. Midshipman Easy	1836	1,200
Japhet in Search of a Father	1836	1,100
The Pirate and the Three Cutters	1836	750
Snarley Yow; or, the Dog Fiend	1837	1,300
The Phantom Ship	1839	
A Diary in America	1839	1,600
Olla Podrida	1840	
Poor Jack	1840	
Masterman Ready	1841	
Joseph Rushbrook; or, The Poacher	1841	400[1]
Percival Keene	1842	
Narrative of the Travels and Adventures of Monsieur Violet	1843	
Settlers in Canada	1844	
The Mission; or, Scenes in Africa	1845	
The Privateer's Man	1846	
Children of the New Forest	1847	
The Little Savage (Published posthumously).[2]	1848–9	
Valérie (Published posthumously).[2]	1849	

[1] In advance of two-thirds of the profits.
[2] Partly written by Marryat and completed by another hand.

JOHN FISHER

BARON FISHER OF KILVERSTONE

Admiral of the Fleet

1841–1920

JOHN FISHER

I

'These Leagues of Nations and Freedoms of the Seas and all the other items are all d——d nonsense! When war does come, then "Might is Right." "La raison du plus fort est toujours la meilleure!" and every treaty is a Scrap of Paper!

'The Essence of War is Violence.
Moderation in War is Imbecility.
You hit first, hit hard, and keep on hitting.
You have to be Ruthless, Relentless and Remorseless.
It's perfect rot to talk about "Civilised Warfare!"
You might as well talk about a "Heavenly Hell!"'

These words, which sum up in no uncertain fashion the late Lord Fisher's ideas upon the subject of naval war, are here quoted by permission of the publishers, Messrs. Hodder and Stoughton, from the veteran admiral of the fleet's *Records* dictated by himself in the seventy-ninth year of his age and published on December 8th, 1919. Another volume, *Memories*, had appeared on the previous October 21st, Trafalgar Day.

Both books are remarkable, though, had Lord Fisher had his way, neither would ever have been written. They present neither an ordered biography, nor a history of the Navy and of naval policy generally as the author knew them during the sixty-one years he so faithfully and energetically served his country. They contain rambling chapters on every conceivable naval topic, and many on non-naval subjects, dictated as they came into the old seaman's head, with here and there memoranda on the many reforms he had originated and carried into effect, letters he had written or received, reminiscences of King Edward, who was his intimate friend, and of other notable people with whom he had come into contact, his thoughts on the Bible, and 'Things that please me.' They are peppered and punctuated throughout with those forceful sayings and quotations of which he was so fond.

They are somewhat difficult to follow in compiling a biography, for chronological sequence is utterly lacking.

Neither are they always strictly accurate. Early recollections become dulled after the passage of half a century. But it is peculiar that the frontispiece of *Records* signed 'Fisher, 1882,' should purport to show him as captain of the *Inflexible* in that year. This cannot be so, for in the photograph he wears the badge and star of the K.C.B. which he was not created until 1894.

The books are not discreet, for it was not in his nature so to be. For one who had occupied responsible official positions for so many years 'and was charged with so much secret and deadly business, Lord Fisher appeared amazingly voluminous and reckless in correspondence,'[1] says Mr. Winston Churchill. His letters were 'interspersed with felicitous and sometimes recondite quotations, with flashing phrases and images, with mordant jokes and corrosive personalities. All were dashed off red-hot as they left his mind, his strong pen galloping along in the wake of the imperious thought. He would often audaciously fling out on paper thoughts which other people would hardly admit to their own minds. It is small wonder that his turbulent passage left so many foes foaming in his wake. The wonder is that he did not shipwreck himself a score of times. The buoyancy of his genius alone supported the burden.'[1]

Lord Fisher, we are told, had little faith in the printed word. The pages of a book lacked what he called 'aroma,' the aroma of a great personality whose conversation, always bright and sparkling, was ever interlarded with strange, explosive utterances accompanied by gesticulations.

'The man who reads this . . .' he says in his *Memories*, 'would take it all quite differently if I could walk up and down in front of him and shake my fist in his face.'

He goes on to relate that in one of his moments of wild enthusiasm he even shook his fist in the face of King Edward, who had to ask him to desist.

Once he tried to make print a little more lifelike by using different kinds of type—'big Roman block letters for the "fist-shaking," large italics for the cajoling, small italics for the facts, and ordinary print for the fool. The printer's price was ruinous, and the effect ludicrous.' Nevertheless, he made an arrangement whereby the words 'Fool,' 'Ass,' and 'Congenital Idiot' were always to be printed in large capitals.

He seldom read a book, he observes, but contented himself by looking at the pages as he would at a picture, and thereby grasped the meaning. He confesses, moreover, to having

[1] *The World Crisis, 1911–1914*, pp. 78, 79.

only one idea at a time, for which he was once taken to task by King Edward.

'Anyhow,' Lord Fisher asserts he replied to His Majesty, 'I am stopping a fortnight with you at Balmoral, and I never expected that when I entered the Navy, penniless, friendless, and forlorn!'

One sees in him a certain resemblance to another great naval figure born about a century before—the Earl of St. Vincent, though St. Vincent was incomparably the greater man of the two. Neither suffered fools gladly. Both were reformers. Both, hating inefficiency, had a complete irreverence for all that went by the name of tradition and custom. Both were 'Ruthless, relentless, and remorseless' in uprooting incompetency, and in their tireless zeal for their Service and country. St. Vincent forged the weapon with which Nelson won the battle of Trafalgar. Fisher was largely responsible for the fleet which proved the 'Sure Shield of Empire' during the Great War. In the process of reform both made many enemies, but both rose to the heights of their profession through their ability, dogged determination, fierce energy, and indomitable will-power.

2

John Arbuthnot Fisher was born at Rambodde, Ceylon, on January 25th, 1841. He was the eldest child of Captain William Fisher, of the 78th Highlanders and 95th Foot, who was at that time A.D.C. to the governor of Ceylon. His mother, Sophia, was the daughter of Alfred Lamb, of New Bond Street, London.

The boy seems to have been sent home to England at the age of six, and until he joined the Navy lived with his maternal grandmother, who had apparently come upon evil times and was forced to take in lodgers. These, says Fisher, gave him bread and butter. Otherwise his staple food was boiled rice and brown sugar.

Nominated for the Royal Navy by Admiral Sir William Parker, the last of Nelson's captains, he passed a somewhat cursory entrance examination, all he was required to do being to write out the Lord's Prayer, to do a simple sum in arithmetic, and to drink a glass of sherry. He entered the Service on board the *Victory*, the depot ship at Portsmouth, on July 12th, 1854. Fifty years later he hauled down his admiral's flag in the same ship on vacating the appointment of commander-in-chief at Portsmouth to become First Sea Lord.

His first service afloat was as naval cadet in the 84-gun ship *Calcutta* which he joined at Plymouth. In February 1855, she went round to Portsmouth, and in June took out men, stores and ammunition to the fleet in the Baltic during the war with Russia. He seems to have had little pocket-money, and, like John Jervis, a century before, had to live as best he could upon his Service allowance of provisions.

The victualling of the Navy, like its ships, had not greatly changed since Trafalgar. Ship's biscuit was stowed in 'bread bags,' which encouraged weevils. The water, still kept in casks in certain ships, was generally odoriferous and turgid. The salt beef and pork had often been half-way round the world and back again before the casks were opened up for use and the contents served out, stiff and crackling with brine. 'Devilled pork rind,' says Lord Fisher, 'was a luxury, and a Spanish onion with a sardine in the middle watch was paradise!'

Returning from the Baltic in September 1855, the *Calcutta* remained at Portsmouth until the following February, when she paid off. On March 2nd, 1856, young Fisher was appointed to the *Agamemnon*, employed in evacuating troops from the Crimea. She arrived at Portsmouth with the Coldstream Guards on June 27th, 1856, and was paid off. He joined the *Highflyer*, refitting at Portsmouth, on July 13th, and on September 29th the ship sailed for the East Indies by way of the Cape of Good Hope. China was then in the East Indies command, and, on the outbreak of the second China war, most of the ships of the East Indies squadron were despatched to the Far East.

The *Highflyer* was commanded by Captain Shadwell, a kindly, religious man whom the seamen, somewhat irreverently, nicknamed 'Our Heavenly Father.' He fed seasick midshipmen upon ginger-nuts and champagne, and was once exceedingly wrath with the 'young gentlemen' because, taking the law into their own hands, they punished a messmate who stole his, the captain's, cheese. Fisher describes his commanding-officer as being ashore in action against the Chinese with no deadlier weapon than a white umbrella, and wearing white trousers, a yellow waistcoat, blue tail-coat, and a tall, white hat with a gold stripe down the side.

It was Captain Shadwell who brought the young midshipman to the notice of Rear-Admiral James Hope—afterwards Sir James Hope, K.C.B.—who had succeeded Sir Michael Seymour as commander-in-chief early in 1859. In January 1860, Fisher was transferred to the flagship *Chesapeake*, and on

the 25th of that month, his nineteenth birthday, having passed in seamanship and possessing the necessary five years' service, became an acting-mate, or, as we should now call it, an acting sub-lieutenant. On March 29th he was made an acting-lieutenant and was appointed by Sir James Hope in temporary command of the *Coromandel*, a small vessel employed on special service. Sir James Hope's motto, says Fisher, was 'Favouritism is the Secret of Efficiency,' and, in putting his *protégé* into a position of some responsibility over the heads of many older men, he did so because he had confidence in the youngster, and knew he would carry out his orders regardless of consequences.

Fisher, as he readily admits, made all sorts of mistakes, nearly lost his ship, and came back expecting to be court-martialled. The admiral, however, caring only that the boy had done what he had been ordered, gave him the command of another small vessel.

June 10th, 1860, saw him, still as an acting-lieutenant, transferred to the *Furious*, Captain Oliver Jones, for passage home to England. Captain Jones, he says in his *Records*, was Satanic, for, like Satan, he could disguise himself as an angel. 'I believe I was the only officer he did not put under arrest. . . . He told me when I first came on board that he thought he had committed every crime under the sun except murder. I think he committed that crime while I was with him. He was a most fascinating man.'

Captain Jones, though an excellent host, with the best cook and the best wines in the Service, was what we should now call a 'driver.' He seems rather to have believed in 'frightfulness,' and it speaks well for Fisher's zeal and capability that the captain wrote on his certificate, 'as a sailor, an officer, a navigator and a gentleman, I cannot praise him too highly.'

The *Furious*, leaving Hong-Kong on March 21st, 1861, with presents on board from the Emperor of Japan to Queen Victoria, arrived at Spithead on August 20th. Eight days later Fisher finally passed for lieutenant.

After undergoing courses ashore, when he won the Beaufort Testimonial, a prize of books and instruments awarded annually to the midshipman who did the best examination in navigation when passing for lieutenant, he was appointed, on March 28th, 1863, gunnery lieutenant of H.M.S. *Warrior*. This ship, completed in 1861, was the first seagoing ironclad in the British Navy, a ship-rigged vessel with a speed of 14 knots under steam, protected by 4½ inch iron armour for two-thirds of her length, and carrying ten 250 pounder and sixteen

115 pounder rifled muzzle-loading guns. Fisher, only just over twenty-two years of age, was the 'baby' of the ward-room, and, besides being rather spoilt by his elder messmates, became popular with the lieutenants for the reason that he rarely went ashore and was always ready to take their turn of duty.

He was once landed in charge of a large party of seamen for a banquet at Liverpool. The mayor had promised that only two bottles of beer should be served out to each man, and when the banquet was over one of the senior petty officers rose in his chair, unasked, and said he wished to thank the mayor and corporation for an excellent dinner and the best beer he had ever tasted. Then he stopped and whispered to a ship-mate: "Bill, hand me up that beer again."

Bill replied there was no more beer. The petty officer's two bottles had already been exhausted.

The mayor, however, took the hint, more beer was forth-coming, the seaman drank deeply, and then resumed his speech.

"This," he said, looking round the galleries crowded with ladies. "This is joy. Here we are, British sailors entirely surrounded by females!"

The ladies kissed their hands and fluttered their handker-chiefs, whereupon the speech-maker was urged into a fresh flight of eloquence.

"Shipmates," he said, "what was it like now coming into this 'ere harbour of Liverpool? Why, this is what it was like. Sailing into a haven of joy before a gale of pleasure!"

He was pulled down before he could say any more, and given more beer. The banquet was a great success, though the gunnery lieutenant took the precaution of marching the men back to the boats in fours, with their arms linked.

Fisher remained in the *Warrior* for three and a half years, until, on November 3rd, 1866, he was appointed to the in-structional staff of H.M.S. *Excellent*, the gunnery school-ship at Portsmouth. In the same year he married the only daughter of the Rev. Thomas Delves Broughton, whom he had known since boyhood.

Less than three years in the gunnery school brought him, on August 2nd, 1869, his promotion to the rank of commander at the early age of twenty-eight and a half. Three years in the flagship in China followed. He returned to England in 1872 in the *Ocean*, a wooden line-of-battleship converted into a partial ironclad by having armour bolted on to her sides. She was so unseaworthy that her seams opened and shut

and squirted in jets of water in anything approaching heavy weather. After a short spell of leave, he was again, on September 19th, 1872, appointed to the gunnery ship *Excellent* to start a naval torpedo school.

The automobile torpedo, a weapon of tremendous possibilities, had been invented four years before by Mr. Whitehead, a British engineer living in Austria. In its original form it was capable of a speed of only 8 knots, and had a range of no more than a quarter of a mile. From this small beginning, however, has gradually been evolved the powerful weapon of to-day, which, with its heavy charge of explosive and sensitive steering apparatus, can travel almost to the visible horizon at a speed of 30 knots or more.

Fisher was promoted to captain on October 30th, 1874, at the early age of thirty-three, because, as he says in *Memories*, a Lord of the Admiralty had heard him lecturing to a class of admirals. In point of fact, he was already a marked man, a man of outstanding ability and vision, who shone out all the more because the Navy of the period was top-heavy with mediocre flag-officers and captains who, content to do as Nelson had done, were violently antipathetic to any innovation.

He remained on in the *Excellent* for another two years, establishing a torpedo school, until, towards the end of 1876, he was called to the Admiralty to serve on a torpedo committee. Thence he was sent to Fiume with a mission to arrange for the purchase of the manufacturing rights of the Whitehead torpedo.

There followed six years' continuous service at sea, first for four months in the *Pallas* and *Hercules* in the Mediterranean, and then, on March 15th, 1877, as flag-captain to Admiral Sir A. Cooper-Key, commander-in-chief in North America, with his flag in the *Bellerophon*. June 7th, 1878, saw him flag-captain to the same officer in the *Hercules*, during the ten weeks the Particular Service Squadron was in commission during a a war scare, but on January 1st, 1879, he was again appointed to the *Pallas*, in the Mediterranean. July of the same year saw him in England acting as president of a committee for the revision of the naval *Gunnery Manual*.

It must have been at about this period that he spent some time living in lodgings at Bruges with his wife, son, and three small daughters. He observes how well they were looked after, and how little they were charged, for which he was all the more grateful as he had no means beyond his pay.

September 1879 again found him on the North America and the West Indies station as flag-captain in the *Northampton*

to the commander-in-chief, Vice-Admiral Sir Leopold M'Clintock, well known as an Arctic explorer. Little more than a year later, however, he was recalled to England to fit out and to become the first captain of the newly-built battleship *Inflexible*, the most wonderful vessel of her day. She had the thickest armour, the heaviest guns afloat, was full of new inventions, and was the first ship in the British Navy to be provided with electric light, which was fitted at Fisher's own instigation. He had a difficult task to pursuade the admiral superintendent at Portsmouth that the new lighting was perfectly safe, and it was only by dint of breaking a lamp over a tray of guncotton and gunpowder, which did not blow up, that he finally had his way.

He took up his appointment to his new ship on January 18th, 1881, precisely a week before his fortieth birthday. He was still a young captain, and had been selected over the heads of many others for the command of the finest and most up-to-date battleship in the world.

His career had fairly started.

When ready, the *Inflexible* proceeded to the Mediterranean to join the fleet under the command of Admiral Sir Beauchamp Seymour, afterwards Lord Alcester. On July 11th, 1882, she was present at the bombardment of Alexandria, Captain Fisher afterwards being sent ashore by the admiral in command of the naval brigade which garrisoned the town. It was here that he organised an armoured train which was used to reconnoitre Arabi Pasha's rebel army entrenched a few miles away in the desert.

The Egyptian campaign earned him his C.B. ; the Order of the Osmanieh, 3rd class ; the Egyptian medal and clasp, and the Khedive's bronze star.

Struck down with dysentery while ashore, he was invalided home on November 9th, hardly expecting to live. He was ill for some months, and was finally cured after a three weeks' visit to Marienbad, which cost him, as he observes, twenty-five pounds, including railway fares. 'It is wonderful what a lot you can get for your money if you think it over,' he says. 'I got breakfast for tenpence, lunch for a shilling and dinner for eighteenpence, and barley water for nothing and a bed for three and sixpence (but my bedroom had not a Southern aspect).'

Invited by Queen Victoria to stay at Osborne, an invitation repeated each year until she died, April 6th, 1883, saw him appointed to the command of the gunnery school-ship *Excellent* at Portsmouth.

In 1885, when this country was on the brink of hostilities with Russia, the Navy was discovered to be utterly unprepared for war, and it was while serving in the *Excellent* that Fisher collaborated with Mr. W. T. Stead in the production of *The Truth about the Navy*, which showed up its inadequacy and many deficiencies. This helped to bring about the Naval Defence Act of 1889, which greatly augmented the fleet. It was partly responsible, too, for an annual partial mobilisation and naval manœuvres during the summer which, starting in 1887, tried out the manning arrangements for the ships normally kept in reserve, and permitted them to be used at sea for a few weeks in each year. It was undoubtedly a step in the right direction, though so far there was no settled Admiralty policy for the utilisation of the Navy in the event of war.

On November 1st, 1886, Fisher became Director of Naval Ordnance at the Admiralty, where, among other things, he carried out the transfer of the control and supply of naval guns and ammunition from the War Office to the Admiralty.

August 2nd, 1890, brought him his promotion to rear-admiral. His age was forty-nine.

3

Promoted to flag rank, Rear-Admiral Fisher remained at the Admiralty as Director of Naval Ordnance until May 21st, 1891, when he was appointed admiral superintendent of Portsmouth Dockyard. Here, by concentrating a large number of workmen upon the *Royal Sovereign*, the first of a new type of battleship laid down under the Naval Defence Act, he succeeded in getting her completed within two years, which, for those leisurely days of shipbuilding, was a remarkable performance.

On February 1st, 1892, however, he was brought back to the Admiralty as Third Sea Lord and Controller, where, for three years, he was responsible for the state and condition of the Navy, and the replacement of obsolete and worn-out ships of war by the new vessels constructed under the Naval Defence Act. Instead of the old-fashioned locomotive boilers, he was instrumental in bringing in boilers of the water-tube type, in face of the most strenuous opposition.

'Knowledge is power,' he wrote years afterwards.[1] 'When you have been a kitchenmaid no one can silly you as to how to boil potatoes. So I was able to introduce the wondrous turbine engine,[2] knock out the old type of boiler, and put the fire where the water used to be and the water where the fire

[1] *The Times*, September 8th, 1919. [2] In 1904.

used to be, so that a ship could get up steam in twenty minutes instead of taking five-and-a-half hours.'

It was during his tenure of office as Third Sea Lord that there occurred a disagreement between the Prime Minister, Mr. Gladstone, and the Admiralty on the subject of the building programme. The First Lord, Lord Spencer, had been convinced by the First Sea Lord, Admiral Sir Frederick Richards, that certain ships were vitally and urgently necessary. 'Mr. Gladstone would not have it,' says Lord Fisher in *Records*. 'Sir Frederick Richards and myself, in quite a nice way, not quite point-blank, intimated that the Sea Lords would resign. (My bread and butter was at stake, but I did it.) Lord Spencer threw in his lot with us, and conveyed the gentle likelihood to Mr. Gladstone.'

Sir William Harcourt and Sir Michael Hicks-Beach, then Chancellor of the Exchequer, did their utmost to prevent Lord Spencer and his colleagues from taking this extreme step. Neither Lord Spencer nor Sir Frederick Richards, apparently, was very good at lucid explanation. 'So I usually did Aaron all through with Sir William Harcourt,' says Fisher. In other words, his forceful personality being recognised, he was left to do most of the talking. He brought his heaviest guns into action with devastating effect.

'We got the ships,'[1] he says, 'and Mr. Gladstone went.'[2]

Appointed a K.C.B. on May 26th, 1894, Sir John remained at the Admiralty until the following year. May 8th, 1896, saw his promotion to vice-admiral, and on August 24th, 1897, he hoisted his flag in the *Renown* as commander-in-chief of the North America and West Indies station.

We are told comparatively little of his doings in North America, but in *Memories* he gives us at least one good story of an incident that occurred when Admiral Sampson brought a squadron of the United States Navy to Bermuda. At the banquet given in the American admiral's honour, Sir John proposed his health with that of the United States. For some time Admiral Sampson did not reply. Finally, one of his officers whispered in his ear, and the wine again being passed he rose to his feet. He made what Lord Fisher describes as the best speech he ever heard, certainly the shortest. 'It was a damned fine old hen that hatched the American Eagle!'

After his strenuous years at the Admiralty the vice-admiral's two years abroad must have seemed something like a 'rest-cure'; but in 1899 he was at home again to attend the first

[1] *Records*, p. 53. [2] Mr. Gladstone resigned on March 3rd, 1894.

Hague Conference as the principal British naval delegate. And on July 1st of the same year he was appointed to the chief command afloat, commander-in-chief of the Mediterranean Fleet, then the largest fleet in the world, which he held for two years.

Lord Charles Beresford was his second-in-command, and, as Lord Charles observes of this period in his memoirs, the commander-in-chief greatly improved the fleet's efficiency. 'As a result of his representations, the stocks of coal at Malta and Gibraltar were increased, the torpedo flotillas were strengthened, and the new breakwaters at Malta were begun. Some of Sir John Fisher's reforms are confidential, but among his achievements which became common knowledge, the following are notable : From a 12-knot fleet with breakdowns, he made a 15-knot fleet without breakdowns ; introduced long range target practice, and instituted the Challenge Cup for heavy gun shooting ; instituted various war practices for officers and men ; invited, with excellent results, officers to formulate their opinions upon cruising and battle formation ; drew up complete instructions for torpedo flotillas ; exercised cruisers in towing destroyers and battleships in towing one another, thereby proving the utility of the device for saving coal in an emergency; and generally carried into execution fleet exercises based, not on tradition, but on the probabilities of war.'

It is curious to realise, however, that throughout his period of service as commander-in-chief in the Mediterranean, Sir John was constantly urging the Admiralty to strengthen the Mediterranean Fleet. In other words, he visualised no potential enemy nearer home. In 1887, however, there had been inaugurated at the Admiralty a Naval Intelligence Department, part of whose duty it was to draw up war plans laying down the methods in which the Navy should be utilised during war. I have it on the very highest authority that, since 1900, this Department had already decided that Germany was Britain's most probable future enemy.

Sir John Fisher was promoted to admiral on November 2nd, 1901, but retained command of the Mediterranean Fleet until, on June 5th, 1902, he was recalled to the Admiralty as Second Sea Lord in the Board which had Lord Selborne as First Lord and Admiral Lord Walter Kerr as First Sea Lord.

Some time before, while still in the Mediterranean, he had been putting forward his views on the training and education of naval officers. Masts and sails had died out. Their place had been taken by machinery, and it was his idea that, in future,

all combatant officers must also be engineers. As Second Sea Lord in charge of naval personnel, it now became his duty to carry his ideas into practice.

The old training-ship *Britannia* at Dartmouth, where cadets had formerly received fifteen months' instruction before being sent to sea as midshipmen at ages of between fifteen and three-quarters and sixteen and three-quarters, was already earmarked for condemnation and about to be replaced by a college ashore. But the 'New' or 'Selborne scheme,' as it was generally called, went further than that. Briefly, boys of about twelve and three-quarters, straight from preparatory schools, were to join a new college at Osborne for two years' training, after which they were to be sent to the Royal Naval College at Dartmouth for a further two years before going to sea at the age of about seventeen. The officers of the three principal branches of the Service, the combatant or executive, the engineer, and the marine, were all to be entered together and to receive the same training and instruction in mechanical engineering until about the age of twenty-two. Then, and not before, they were to be appropriated by selection as deck officers, from which would be drawn the gunnery, torpedo, navigating, and other specialists; as engineers; and as marines.

The scheme was variously criticised, and, like all drastic innovations, had its opponents, both in the Navy and out of it. But it aimed at giving all officers a sound mechanical knowledge, and in making experts of those finally selected as engineers. This partial 'mechanisation' of the officer personnel was undoubtedly a step in the right direction, for masts and sails had been abolished, and every day ships were becoming more and more complicated and difficult.

From time to time, alterations in the original scheme have been found necessary. For instance, the idea of obtaining marine officers from among those who entered the Royal Naval College as cadets of twelve and three-quarters had to be dropped, while it was not found possible for officers of the deck and engineering departments to be interchangeable throughout their service. Yet, in its main features, that of officering the executive and engineering branches of the Navy from the same source, the scheme of 1902 still holds good to-day.

On June 26th, 1902, Sir John Fisher was created a G.C.B. in the list of honours awarded at the time of King Edward's Coronation. On May 2nd, 1903, still as Second Sea Lord, he made his first public speech at the Royal Academy banquet. It was a trenchant and an amusing speech, quoted in full on

pages 79 to 83 of *Records*. In it, he observed that the Admiralty realised 'that on the British Navy rests the British Empire. Nothing else is any use without it, not even the Army. We are different from Continental nations. No soldier of ours can go anywhere unless a sailor carries him there on his back. I am not disparaging the Army. I am looking forward to their coming to sea with us as they did in the old days. . . . I think I may say,' he concluded, 'that we now have a Board of Admiralty that is united, progressive, and determined, and you may sleep quietly in your beds.'

August 31st, 1903, saw him appointed commander-in-chief at Portsmouth to supervise the inauguration of the new education scheme for officers at the Royal Naval College at Osborne. In the same year he was associated with Lord Esher and Sir George Clarke (Lord Sydenham) to consider the reorganisation of the War Office. 'How I got there is still a mystery,' he observes in *Memories*.

But it is not so much a mystery as it appears, for in 1903, Fisher and Lord Esher had both urged on the King the desirability of a fresh organisation of the War Office on the lines that had already proved efficacious at the Admiralty,[1] and these two were King Edward's nominees on the committee.

Sir John's ideas on the reorganisation of the sister Service, to say the least of them, were drastic, and went far beyond the actual War Office. He proposed, among other things, to increase the efficiency of military officers by adopting the naval idea of very early entry, to abolish the regimental system to ensure equality of promotion, and to incorporate both Army and Navy into one great Service. These proposals were naturally unacceptable, though the War Office was reorganised more or less on the lines of the Admiralty.

Sir John does not appear to have realised, however, that there were serious defects in the organisation of the Admiralty itself—in short, that it was still more an administrative concern than an organisation for carrying on maritime war, studying its many varied aspects.

In the autumn of 1903 and the early months of 1904 he was turning his attention to submarines, the first of which, small craft of 122 tons displacement and a surface speed of 9-knots with one torpedo tube, had appeared in the British Navy three years before. 'Submarines are only playthings,' was the remark of one senior admiral several years later, while Lord Charles Beresford once referred to them as 'Fisher's toys.'

[1] *King Edward VII. A Biography*, Vol. II., by Sir Sidney Lee. (Macmillan, 1927.)

But in October 1903, after some manœuvres at sea against a fleet by the flotilla of submarines from Portsmouth, Sir John wrote that the submarine was 'unattackable,' and that its advent must revolutionise naval tactics.

'It's astounding to me, *perfectly astounding*,' he said in a letter written to a friend on April 20th, 1904, 'how the very best amongst us absolutely fail to realise the vast impending revolution in naval warfare and naval strategy that the submarine will accomplish! . . . I have not disguised my opinion, in season and out of season, as to the essential, imperative, immediate, vital, pressing, urgent (I can't think of any more adjectives!) necessity for more submarines at once . . . or we shall be caught with our breeches down, just as the Russians have been![1] In all seriousness, I don't think it is even *faintly* realised—*the immense impending revolution which the submarines will effect as offensive weapons of war.*'

His words were prophetic.

On October 21st (Trafalgar Day), 1904, at the age of sixty-three, he was again called to the Admiralty to serve in Lord Selborne's administration as First Sea Lord. For some years he had been on terms of close personal fellowship with King Edward, and in Sir Sidney Lee's *King Edward VII., A Biography*, we read how, when the Court was at Windsor, the band played after dinner in the crimson drawing-room, 'and occasionally, especially when Lord Fisher was a guest, an impromptu dance would take place.'[2]

The office of First Sea Lord, however, did not permit the Admiral to enjoy the special right of personal intercourse with His Majesty which he considered not only desirable, but essential. To solve the difficulty, he was appointed First and Principal Naval aide-de-camp, and, thereafter, Fisher's influence with the King in naval affairs was paramount.

He 'held an almost fanatical faith in his country's divinely-appointed mission to command the seas, and believed himself capable, if allowed a free hand, of bringing the Navy to an irresistible pitch of efficiency. Fisher's vehemence in talk, and his exuberant profession of loyalty to the Crown, appealed to the King, who became a stout supporter of the admiral's general policy, while shrewdly recognising his tendencies to violent self-assertion and extravagant emphasis.'[3]

[1] He refers, of course, to the inefficient and out-of-date Russian fleet, which subsequently met its fate during the Russo-Japanese war.
[2] *King Edward VII. A Biography*, Vol. II., p. 70.
[3] Ibid., p. 328.

It was in 1904 that Fisher started his long series of breezy letters to Lord Knollys, which the King read with great interest. His Majesty, however, while appreciating the admiral's views on naval affairs, did not pay the same attention to the admiral's political observations, which he termed 'effusions'!

Throughout his term of office, however, Fisher was on terms of the greatest intimacy with King Edward, and, by a curious coincidence, both men had been born in the same year, 1841. Twice, at least, in 1905 and again in 1909, Fisher was prevented from resigning by the personal intervention of the King, and he himself was the first to acknowledge the splendid support given him by His Majesty in the carrying out of his many reforms, some of which roused the bitterest opposition.

The five years and three months during which Fisher served the country as First Sea Lord were the most active and pregnant years of his life. Though politicians and others might try to lull the public into the belief that war with Germany was impossible, Sir John had adopted the view first put forward by the Naval Intelligence Department in 1900. He had come to realise that war with Germany was inevitable. Every one of his reforms was carried out in direct preparation for the struggle he saw looming up over the eastern horizon, and often in the face of the most strenuous opposition.

Ruthless, relentless, and remorseless, to use his favourite expression, he rode roughshod over his enemies. His methods were not gentle. They roused the most bitter animosities, and, as says Mr. Winston Churchill, 'he made it known, indeed he proclaimed, that officers of whatever rank who opposed his policies would have their professional careers ruined. As for traitors, i.e. those that struck at him openly or secretly, "their wives should be widows, their children fatherless, their homes a dunghill." This he repeated again and again.'[1] And he meant what he said. Many admirals and captains, who did not see eye to eye with him, were compelled to eat out their hearts ashore in the idleness of enforced half-pay.

He did not make himself loved. His fierce methods divided the senior officers of the Service into two great factions, those who were 'Fisherites,' and those who were not. But in a position to make his power felt, he had his own way, and adopted his own methods in preparing the Navy for the war he so clearly foresaw—the war that was to burst like a cataclysm over Europe ten years afterwards.

[1] *The World Crisis, 1911–1914*, p. 73.

He had not been at the Admiralty for longer than six weeks, when, on December 6th, 1904, was issued an Admiralty Memorandum which completely reorganised the distribution of the fleet and increased its preparedness for war. The scheme, which originated in the First Sea Lord's brain, was brought about by the rapid growth of the German Navy, and the shifting of the probable main area of future naval hostilities to the North Sea.

The memorandum inaugurated a 'nucleus crew' system, whereby all the older vessels of war, still useful for hostilities, but not actually in full commission, were to be ready for instant mobilisation. They were to carry their principal officers, and from two-fifths to three-fifths of their normal complements, which included all the specialists, such as turret's crews, gunlayers, sight-setters, torpedo-men, and, of course, the skilled ratings for engine and boiler-rooms. They were to carry out periodical firings and other exercises at sea, and all that was necessary to make these vessels instantly ready for war was to march the remaining portions of their crews on board from the barracks and instructional establishments at Portsmouth, Devonport, and Chatham.

The 'nucleus crew' system was undoubtedly an improvement on the older scheme of maintaining skeleton crews on board ships in reserve. It gave these vessels a considerable amount of sea-time during the year.

The second alteration was the withdrawal of many ships from foreign stations, principally from the Mediterranean, to the new focus of activity in home waters, and the ruthless 'scrapping' of many others which were considered too weak to fight and too slow to run away.

'With one courageous stroke of the pen,' as Lord Balfour termed it, or, as Fisher himself put it, by a measure that was 'Napoleonic in its audacity and Cromwellian in its thoroughness,' no less than one hundred and fifty vessels were so removed from the effective list, to be broken up, sold, or relegated to the last category of the reserve. Many of these ships were lame ducks, useless in war, which, besides wasting the time of the officers and men serving in them, cost the country a large annual sum in upkeep and fuel. Their removal resulted in a saving on the Navy Estimates, while the redistribution concentrated in the Home Fleet, based in home waters, the best fighting ships we possessed.

There were many critics, however, who condemned the wholesale withdrawal of still useful ships from abroad. They pointed out, with truth, that in the opening phases of a maritime war, British merchantmen, all the world over, would be left to the mercy of any moderately fast ships carrying guns. ' Some reduction may have been advisable,' wrote one very distinguished flag-officer, under his pseudonym of ' Barfleur,' in the pages of *Blackwood's Magazine* for June 1905, ' but that it was overdone is proved by the fact that it was found necessary to replace some of the ships withdrawn.'

This may have been so, for, when the Great War came less than ten years afterwards, every man-of-war that could go to sea was eventually made use of. The *Revenge* (afterwards renamed the *Redoubtable*), for instance, an old battleship dating from the early 'nineties, together with sloops and ancient ' flat-iron ' gunboats of the 'seventies, used in peace for the sea-going firings of officers and men passing through the gunnery schools, were soon in hot action off the Belgian coast. Other old battleships and cruisers, long past their work with modern fleets, were used in the Dardanelles. A host of miscellaneous vessels, including numerous specially-commissioned armed merchant cruisers, were necessary all the world over, not merely for the protection of our essential trade, but also for the safeguarding of convoys carrying troops to the several theatres of land operations.

But no great reform can be carried out without subsequent amendment, and in peace it is impossible always wholly to visualise the thousand and one different subsidiary services for which ships may be required in world-wide hostilities. The war, when it did come, was not confined merely to the North Sea. Germany, moreover, was not our only enemy.

And whatever faults may have been found with the re-distribution of the fleet, were faults only in detail. Sir John Fisher's ' courageous stroke of the pen ' in the winter of 1904 contributed in no small degree to the readiness of the Navy ten years later.

In an article in *The Times* of September 9th, 1919, and again in *Records*, Lord Fisher describes himself as locked up in a secluded room at the Admiralty one day in 1905, looking at a chart of the North Sea while making up his mind upon a safe and properly-situated anchorage for the British fleet in the event of war with Germany. His eye fell upon ' a large inland land-locked sheet of water, but there was no name to it on the chart and no sounding in it put on the chart. I sent

for the hydrographer, and, pointing to the spot, I said : "Bring me the large scale chart. What's its name?" He didn't know. He would find out.' He goes on to describe how, after a long delay, the hydrographer returned to say the place had not been properly surveyed, but he believed it to be called Scapa Flow ! An hour later, he continues, a surveying ship was on her way north, and eventually discovered that ' though the current raged through the Pentland Firth at sometimes 14 knots, yet inside this huge, secluded basin it was comparatively a stagnant pool ! '

I should like to believe this story, were it not for the fact that there now lies unrolled before me the copy of ' A chart of the South Isles of Orkney, to show the Situation and extent of Scapa Flow, as a proposed Roadstead for Line-of-Battle-Ships, most humbly Presented to the Right Honourable the Lords Commissioners of the Admiralty, by Graeme Spence, late Maritime Surveyor to their Lordships, 1812.' The suggested berths for thirty line-of-battleships are shown by neatly drawn circles in the northern portion of the Flow. The original of this sheet was on view in a special collection of charts and maps at the Science Museum in South Kensington during the summer and autumn of 1928, and though Lord Fisher may have selected Scapa Flow as a suitable anchorage for the fleet, it is hardly true to say that he ' discovered ' it, or that it had not been surveyed.

The next step undertaken by Sir John, in January, 1905, was the appointment of a committee to enquire into the reorganisation of the dockyards to accelerate shipbuilding, the next, in March, to improve the shooting of the Navy, by appointing Rear-Admiral Percy Scott ' Inspector of Target Practice,' and Captain J. R. Jellicoe (afterwards Earl Jellicoe), Director of Naval Ordnance.

A more momentous decision still was the building of the *Dreadnought*, the first specimen of a completely new type of battleship.

With a displacement of 17,900 tons, and driven by turbines at a speed of 22 knots, she mounted ten 12-inch guns. Laid down at Portsmouth on October 2nd, 1905, she was launched by King Edward on February 10th, 1906. Completed the following December, she created a world's record in battle-ship building. No previous capital ship had possessed her speed, or had carried more than four 12-inch guns. Her advent, therefore, rendered all previous battleships, including the German, more or less obsolete, and, besides setting an

entirely new standard in naval strength, placed Britain a long way ahead.

New types of cruiser, now known as 'battle-cruisers,' soon followed with the launch of the *Invincible*, *Indomitable*, and *Inflexible*, in 1907. These ships, driven by turbines at a speed of 25 knots and armed with eight 12-inch guns, put all previous cruisers completely out of court. With their heavy armaments, they were, in reality, fast battleships, and could safely tackle all older vessels of that type.

The normal age of retirement for admirals is sixty-five, that of admirals of the fleet, seventy. January 25th, 1906, was Sir John Fisher's sixty-fifth birthday. On the previous December 4th, however, the Order of Merit was conferred upon him on King Edward's personal initiative, and he was promoted by a Special Order in Council to be an additional admiral of the fleet, thus giving him a further five years on the active list to carry out his policy.

In 1908, he approached King Edward with the idea of dealing with the German Fleet before it became too strong. 'It is admitted,' he says, 'that it was not quite a gentlemanly sort of thing for Nelson to go and destroy the Danish Fleet at Copenhagen without notice, but 'la raison du plus fort est toujours la meilleure.'[1] In other words, because the German Navy was aimed at Britain, 'it seemed to me simply a sagacious act on England's part to seize the German Fleet when it was so very easy of accomplishment in the manner I sketched out to His Majesty, and probably without bloodshed. But, alas! even the very whisper of it excited exasperation against the supposed bellicose, but really peaceful, First Sea Lord, and the project was damned.'[1]

One can hardly wonder. One wonders still more whether he was really in earnest in his proposal.

Of the many reforms between this period and January 25th, 1910, when he retired from the office of First Sea Lord, it is impossible to give more than the barest outline. Among other measures, however, he improved the system of refitting ships; established minelaying and minesweeping services; was responsible for the introduction of the 13.5-inch in place of the 12-inch gun; reorganised the service of auxiliary vessels for the fleet in time of war; developed and accelerated the building of submarines and destroyers; developed wireless telegraphy afloat and arranged for the building of various shore stations, including that over the Admiralty, which linked

[1] *Memories*, pp. 18, 19.

it with every fleet and squadron afloat; caused the first experiments to be made in aerial navigation, in so far as it affected the Navy; established a War College at Portsmouth for the instruction of senior officers; established Signal Schools at each of the three home ports and a Navigation School at Portsmouth; brought about great improvements in gunnery and torpedo training; inaugurated a complete system of intelligence of trade movements throughout the world; reorganised the issue of stores to the fleet, besides bringing in many improvements for the welfare of the personnel. Not all these reforms were directly Lord Fisher's, and the War College, which he established at Portsmouth for the instruction of senior officers in the art of war, had already been started at Greenwich in 1900. However, as wrote the late Mr. W. T. Stead in the *Review of Reviews* for February, 1910, 'to the general reader they will be chiefly interesting as suggesting his immense and multifarious labours. It is not surprising that he found it necessary to start work every morning at four o'clock.'

In June, 1908, he visited Reval with King Edward and Queen Alexandra on the occasion of their visit to the Tsar of Russia, and was created a G.C.V.O. soon afterwards. On the 17th of the same month he was granted the honorary degree of LL.D. of Cambridge University, and on December 7th, 1909, was raised to the peerage as Baron Fisher of Kilverstone, in the county of Norfolk, taking the name from the estate bequeathed to his son by the late Mr. Josiah Vavasseur. His selection of a suitable motto on becoming a peer was characteristic. 'Dread nought,' he said in his chapter on 'Things that please me' in *Memories*, 'is over eighty times in the Bible ("Fear Not"). So I took as my motto "Fear God and Dread Nought."'

Mr. Winston Churchill so well describes the circumstances in which he retired from the office of First Sea Lord on January 25th, 1910,[1] his sixty-ninth birthday, that it is unnecessary to go into it in any great detail here.

Briefly, however, both Lord Cawdor and Lord Tweedmouth, who were the First Lords of the Admiralty between 1904 and 1908, were in bad health. Neither being in the House of Commons, moreover, it was difficult to explain in that House the Admiralty policies which it was necessary that the House should ratify. Mr. McKenna, who succeeded Lord Tweedmouth in 1908, supplied an immediate steadying influence, but it was too late. The harm had already been done.

[1] See *The World Crisis, 1911–1914*, pp. 72–76.

The Navy was already divided into two hostile factions. Officers were said to be 'in the fish-pond' or out of it, and at the head of the opposition party stood Lord Charles Beresford, very popular with the public, and at one time commander-in-chief of the principal fleet. Lord Charles based his attack upon the Admiralty upon the Naval Estimates for 1907, saying that the modest building programme laid the country open to invasion by Germany. A battle royal raged between the two admirals, and Fisher himself was of the opinion that the conspiracy against the Admiralty had been brought about with the objects of harassing the government and making Lord Charles First Sea Lord. In writing to the King, he referred to the arguments used against him as 'a simple *réchauffé* of the mendacious drivel of that halfpenny rag, the *Daily Express*. . . .

'When Your Majesty backed up the First Sea Lord against unanimous naval feeling against the *Dreadnought* . . .,' he also wrote, 'it just simply shut up the mouths of the revilers as efficiently as those lions were kept from eating Daniel, *and they would have eaten me but for your Majesty*.'[1]

Whatever Sir John Fisher proposed was vetoed by Lord Charles, and vice versa. Throughout the Service, senior officers inclined to one side or the other. The Admiralty had its adherents in the fleet, and the fleet its friends at Whitehall, so that each side knew what the other was doing. The Navy, in short, became divided against itself, and neither side was strong enough to crush the other. For a time, the 'band of brothers' feeling had been cast overboard, and but for a third body of officers, who steadfastly refused to take one side or the other, the discipline of the Service might have been ruined.

A sub-committee of the Committee of Imperial Defence was appointed to investigate Lord Charles Beresford's allegations of unreadiness. It reported on August 13th, 1909, to the effect that there was no dangerous deficiency, and that there had been no danger to the country from the Admiralty's war arrangements. 'Arrangements, "defensible in themselves, but not ideally perfect," were hampered by the absence of cordial relations between Lord Charles Beresford and the Admiralty. It was intimated that there were faults on both sides, a conclusion with which the King was not slow to agree.'[2]

[1] *King Edward VII. A Biography*, Vol. II., pp. 598, 599.
[2] See *King Edward VII. A Biography*, Vol. II., p. 603.

The incident which finally brought about the termination of Lord Fisher's appointment as First Sea Lord was the publication of certain letters written by one of his adherents, who in 1906 had served under the command of Lord Charles Beresford in the Mediterranean. Sir John had asked this officer to write to him from time to time telling him what went on, and this he did, says Mr. Churchill, 'in letters in themselves of much force and value, but open to the reproach of containing criticisms of his immediate commander.'[1]

Sir John Fisher had these letters printed in 1909 and circulated, with other documents, to his friends and followers in the Admiralty. A copy fell into hostile hands and was published in a London evening newspaper. The first Sea Lord was promptly accused of encouraging disloyalty in allowing subordinates to criticise their immediate superiors; superiors, incidentally, with whom it was notorious he did not see eye to eye. The officer who had written the letter, though of exceptional ability, was forced by Service opinion to retire, and on January 25th, 1910, Lord Fisher himself 'quitted the Admiralty and passed, as everyone believed, finally into retirement and the House of Lords, crowned with achievements, loaded with honours, but pursued by much obloquy, amid the triumph of his foes.'[2]

This in no way lessened the magnitude of the work that he had done. 'There is no doubt whatever that Fisher was right in nine-tenths of what he had fought for. His great reforms sustained the power of the Royal Navy at the most critical period in its history.'[3]

It is interesting to compare his administration as First Sea Lord between 1904 and 1910, with that of the Earl of St. Vincent as First Lord between 1801 and 1805, and I would draw attention to the vote of thanks accorded to Earl St. Vincent in the House of Commons: 'It appears to this House that the conduct of the Earl of St. Vincent, in his late administration, has called an additional lustre to his exalted character, and is entitled to the approbation of this House.' These words are comparable to what was said of Lord Fisher on his retirement by the First Lord of the Admiralty—Mr. Reginald McKenna—in an Admiralty memorandum of March 4th, 1910: 'The measures which are associated with his name and have been adopted by several successive governments will prove of far reaching and lasting benefit to the naval service and the country.'

[1] *The World Crisis, 1911–1914*, p. 76. [2] Ibid., p. 76. [3] Ibid., pp. 74, 75.

5

Mr. Winston Churchill first met Lord Fisher at Biarritz in 1907, when the latter was in the height of his reign as First Sea Lord. They had stayed together for a fortnight in the house of a mutual friend, and, in the course of long and interested conversation, Mr. Churchill had become fully conversant with every detail of the Admiralty policy.

On October 25th, 1911, Mr. Churchill, then Home Secretary, succeeded Mr. McKenna as First Lord of the Admiralty. As soon as he knew for certain he was going to the Admiralty he sent for Lord Fisher, and, in three days, passed together in the quietude of Reigate Priory, the two men discussed the naval situation in all its aspects.

'I found Fisher a perfect volcano of knowledge and of information,' Mr. Churchill writes. 'And as soon as he learnt what my main purpose was, he passed into a state of vehement eruption. . . . Once he began, he could hardly stop. I plied him with questions, and he poured out ideas.'[1]

Almost he made up his mind to recall the veteran seaman to the Admiralty as First Sea Lord, and might have done so had Lord Fisher evinced a desire to be reappointed. But two things deterred him from making the specific offer. The first was that he feared a recrudescence of the feuds and schisms which had undermined the discipline and spirit of the Service. The second was Lord Fisher's age, for he was then in his seventy-first year.

For the time being, therefore, the appointment did not materialise, though Mr. Churchill, as First Lord, carried on Lord Fisher's progressive policy, and consulted him in many questions, particularly in regard to the design of new ships.

It was Lord Fisher who had introduced the 13.5-inch gun with its 1250–1400-lb. shell, in place of the older 12-inch firing a projectile of 850 lbs. only. And soon after Mr. Churchill took office, the ex-First Sea Lord, with his customary vehemence, was urging him to mount a 15-inch in the battleships and battle-cruisers of the new programme. 'To achieve the supply of this gun was the equivalent of a great victory at sea ; to shrink from the endeavour was treason to the Empire. What was it that enabled Jack Johnson to knock out his opponents ? It was the big punch.'

But for Mr. Churchill it was an anxious decision. No modern 15-inch gun existed, and none had ever been made. The

[1] *The World Crisis, 1911–1914*, p. 27.

professional experts were prepared to stake their reputations upon the successful production of the new weapon, but there could be no certainty. If a single gun could be made and tested out, there would be no risk. This, however, would mean a year's delay, and that the five battleships of the *Queen Elizabeth* class must go to sea with the inferior 13.5-inch.

Lord Fisher was consulted again. 'He was steadfast and even violent,' says Mr. Churchill. 'So I hardened my heart and took the plunge. The whole outfit of guns was ordered forthwith.'

It was a courageous decision, for the responsibility was tremendous. Had the new gun proved a failure, the First Lord must have been pilloried. But he had been well served by his professional advisers. The new 15-inch, originally known as 'the 14-inch experimental' for purpose of secrecy, was a brilliant success. It had a range of 35,000 yards, and, firing a shell weighing nearly a ton, was far ahead of any weapon that had ever been mounted afloat.

Before Mr. Churchill's arrival at the Admiralty, there were various destroyers and submarines in the British Navy which depended solely upon oil for their motive power. Their moderate requirements, however, did not make the supply of oil-fuel a serious naval problem. An increase in speed was now desired in the new battleships, an increase of 4 to 5 knots. This in turn would necessitate a great advance in horse-power, and, on the problem being explored out, it was found impossible to give the *Queen Elizabeths* their 25 knots except by the use of oil fuel.

The use of liquid fuel has manifold advantages. Ton for ton it produces a higher speed than coal, and enables ships to stay longer at sea without refuelling. In calm weather ships can replenish their oil-tanks at sea. The laborious process of 'coaling ship,' which involves every member of the ship's company and means great discomfort for everyone, is done away with, the oil-fired ship merely connecting up a few flexible hoses with the source of supply while the pumps do the rest. It also economises the numbers of men required in the boiler-rooms and for trimming coal in the bunkers.

The advantages of oil were numerous, but the difficulty lay in obtaining it in sufficient quantity. Coal, a British product, we had in plenty, but oil must come from abroad. Whence should it be obtained, and how could a large war reserve be stored in this country? How should it be brought from abroad, and the fleet be supplied?

These questions involved a host of others, all difficult of solution. The provision of oil-tanks ashore and the tankers to supply them would involve a huge slice of money out of the Naval Estimates, while the oil supplies of the world were monopolised by trusts largely under foreign control.

It was at this juncture, June, 1912, that Mr. Churchill invited Lord Fisher to become chairman of a Royal Commission on oil supply. It is unnecessary here to detail how, step by step, the enquiries, efforts, and negotiations continued throughout 1912 and 1913, and how the oil supply for the Navy was eventually assured by the Anglo-Persian Oil Convention of 1913. 'For an initial investment of two millions of public money (subsequently increased to five millions),'[1] says Mr. Churchill, the Navy was secured 'a very substantial proportion of its oil supply,' while the British Government acquired 'a controlling share in oil properties and interests which are at present valued at scores of millions sterling.'[1] The Convention also led to 'very considerable economies, which are still continuing, in the purchase price of Admiralty oil.'

Writing in 1923, Mr. Churchill estimated the approximate yield to the government for the original investment of £2,200,000 in the Anglo-Persian Oil Company Limited, as no less than £40,000,000.

And here are a few remarks of Lord Fisher's which he wrote in 1912, in a paper on 'Oil and the Oil Engine,' in which he was already advocating the building of an internal combustion-engined battleship.

'The use of oil increases the strength of the British Navy 33 per cent., because it can re-fuel at sea off the enemy's harbours. Coal necessitates about one-third of the fleet being absent refuelling at a base.'

'Oil for steam-raising reduces the present engine and boiler room personnel some 25 per cent.'

'The sailor's life on the 70,000 h.p. coal-using *Lion* is worse than in any ship in the Service, owing to the constant coalings.'

'It's an economic waste of good material, to keep men grilling in a baking fire-hole at unnecessary labour, and use 300 men when a dozen or so would suffice!'

'Oil does not deteriorate by keeping. Coal does. . . . The initial cost would be substantial but the investment is gilt-edged! We must and can face it. *Si vis pacem para bellum!*'

[1] *The World Crisis, 1911–1914*, p. 134.

'You can re-fuel a ship with oil in minutes as compared with hours with coal!'

'At any moment during re-fuelling the oil-engine ship can fight—the coal-driven ship can't, she is disorganised—the whole crew are black as niggers and worn out with intense physical exertion! In the oil-driven ship one man turns a tap!'

'*It's criminal folly to allow another pound of coal on board a fighting ship!*'

6

It is unnecessary here to describe the circumstances which led to the retirement of Prince Louis of Battenberg from the office of First Sea Lord in October, 1914, after the outbreak of war, but on the 30th of that month Lord Fisher was recalled to the Admiralty to succeed him.

The veteran seaman, 'the most distinguished British naval officer since Nelson,' as Mr. Churchill describes him, was nearly seventy-four years of age. But watching him closely when he occasionally visited the Admiralty, the First Lord had no reason to doubt that his physical strength and mental alertness were equal to the strain of office.

'He left me,' writes Mr. Churchill, 'with the impression of a terrific engine of mental and physical power, burning and throbbing in that aged frame. . . . The originality of his mind and the spontaneity of his nature freed him from conventionalities of all kinds. His genius was deep and true. Above all, he was in harmony with the vast scale of events. Like them, he was built upon a titanic scale.'[1]

Like the Earl of St. Vincent, whose hours of audience as First Lord were from five until seven in the morning, Lord Fisher also did much of his work while most people were still abed. He retired between eight and nine in the evening, and, awaking between four and five, devoted the first hours of the day to a mass of business and correspondence.

Mr. Churchill and Lord Fisher entered into an arrangement whereby neither of them should take any important action without referring to the other, unless a decision had previously been come to. Telegrams, cables, and wireless messages poured into the Admiralty at all hours of the day and night; but as the First Lord himself was never in bed until one or two in the morning, and was called again at eight, their joint watch was practically unceasing.

Within a few days of Lord Fisher's arrival at the Admiralty,

[1] *The World Crisis, 1911–1914*, pp. 402, 403.

actually during the night of November 3rd–4th, news was received of the disaster to Sir Christopher Cradock's squadron off the coast of Chili on November 1st, at the hands of Admiral Von Spee. The details of that gallant but melancholy engagement are matters of common knowledge and need not be entered into here, nor need we discuss the much-debated point as to whether Sir Christopher, one of the best-loved and most courageous officers in the Royal Navy, was right or wrong in giving battle in the manner that he did.

The situation in South American waters, however, became fraught with peril, for there were so many different courses of action open to the victorious German admiral. He might retire to the westward and again vanish in the vast ocean spaces and the scattered island groups of the Pacific. Using the Panama Canal, he could make for the West Indies. Steaming south round Cape Horn, and then up the east coast of South America, he might use his ships for paralysing the stream of important British trade from Argentina, Uruguay, and Brazil. Raiding the Falkland Islands on the way, he could cross the South Atlantic to fall upon the transports conveying troops and munitions from the Cape of Good Hope for the conquest of German South-West Africa, or, proceeding further north, would be able to interfere with the Anglo-French campaign in the Cameroons.

It at once became necessary to reshuffle the British and Allied naval detachments in the South Atlantic and South Pacific Oceans, and to reinforce them. Among other steps in this direction, the First Lord proposed detaching one battle-cruiser from the Grand Fleet.

It was Lord Fisher, however, who persuaded him to detach three battle-cruisers—the *Invincible* and *Inflexible* to the South Atlantic, under the command of Vice-Admiral Sir F. C. Doveton Sturdee (the late chief of staff of the Admiralty) ; and the *Princess Royal* to the West Indies, in case the *Scharnhorst* and *Gneisenau* used the Panama Canal.

Shortly after noon on November 4th the *Invincible* and *Inflexible* were ordered to Devonport to fit out for foreign service with all possible despatch. On November 9th a message was received to say that the earliest possible date for their completion was midnight, November 13th–14th.

"Friday the thirteenth," exclaimed Lord Fisher, when Mr. Churchill, expressing great discontent at the delay, showed him the telegram. "What a day to choose !"

The result was a peremptory reply ordering the two ships

to sail on November 11th, taking, if necessary, dockyard workmen with them. They sailed from Plymouth on the date ordered, and not an instant too soon.

Fifteen days later saw them at the Abrolhos Rocks, off the Brazilian coast, in latitude 17° south, where they were joined by the squadron under Rear-Admiral Stoddart. On the morning of December 7th the concentrated force reached Port Stanley, Falkland Islands, and at once started to coal.

Daybreak on December 8th came fine and clear with extreme visibility, and shortly after 8 a.m., when the ships were still coaling and taking in stores, there came a signal from the *Invincible* : ' Raise steam for full speed. Report when ready.'

It transpired later, that a lady called Mrs. Felton, the wife of a sheep farmer living near Port Pleasant, in the southern part of the island, had been the first to see Von Spee's squadron far away on the horizon to the southward. Sending her maid and house-boy to the top of a ridge to report their movements, she hurried to the telephone, passed the news to the nearest signal station, whence it travelled to Port Stanley. It is pleasing to know that Mrs. Felton was afterwards rewarded by the Admiralty with a silver salver, and her maid with a silver tea-pot.

Von Spee's arrival was utterly unexpected and fortuitous. It had been thought that Port Stanley might be raided, and the old battleship *Canopus* had been moored in the harbour for its defence, and a volunteer force hastily enrolled and drilled. But everybody in the squadron had expected a long hunt before the Germans were finally run to earth. No one for a moment had imagined that Von Spee could appear off the very harbour in which the British squadron lay making its final preparations, and within twenty-four hours of their arrival. It was a priceless stroke of good luck.

Soon after nine the enemy were in sight from the anchorage. Twenty minutes later the *Canopus* opened fire with her 12-inch guns, over the low neck of land behind which she lay moored. By 10 a.m., Sturdee's ships were clearing the harbour, and within half an hour they were all at sea and in chase. At 12.55 p.m., the *Inflexible* fired the first round of the action at a range of 16,000 yards.

It is no part of our business to describe the battle that ensued ; but before night fell the cruisers *Scharnhorst, Gneisenau*, together with the light-cruisers *Nurnberg and Leipzig*, were at the bottom. Only the *Dresden* escaped, and she was hunted down and destroyed three months later.

But for that Admiralty telegram of November 9th, ordering forty-eight hours' advance in the time of sailing of the *Invincible* and *Inflexible*, the Falkland Islands, for a time at any rate, would probably have passed into German hands, and Von Spee's squadron might have inflicted irreparable damage elsewhere.

At the Admiralty, with his characteristic vigour—' explosive energy,' as Mr. Churchill calls it—Lord Fisher flung himself into the task of creating a new war navy. It was congenial work to one who had always revelled in new design, and, calling to his assistance all the shipbuilding talent and resources of Great Britain, even pressing the United States and Canada into service for the construction of submarines and the provision of guns, he soon mapped out a gigantic programme. The First Lord agreed, and before the end of 1914 there had actually been ordered :

7 battleships or battle-cruisers.
12 light cruisers.
65 flotilla leaders and destroyers.
40 large and 22 smaller submarines.
18 large and 19 smaller monitors.
107 sloops and other anti-submarine craft.
60 motor-launches.
240 lighters with internal combustion engines.

All these were due for completion by the end of 1915.

The battle-cruisers *Renown* and *Repulse*, built under this scheme, together with the huge light cruisers *Courageous*, *Furious* and *Glorious*, sanctioned four months later, are described by Mr. Churchill, and rightly so, as ' an old man's children.' They possessed many remarkable features, including a very high speed, but were too lightly built, and, in the case of the battle-cruisers, too lightly armoured, to stand the strains and stress of modern war and battle.

The *Courageous*, *Glorious*, and *Furious*, all of which have since been converted into aircraft carriers, were built to operate with a British armada in the Baltic. The *Furious*, indeed, was designed to mount a couple of 18-inch guns, which, says Lord Fisher, ' with their enormous shells were built to make it impossible for the Germans to prevent the Russian millions from landing on the Pomeranian Coast ! . . . The *Furious* (and all her breed) was not built for salvoes ! They were built for Berlin, and that's why they drew so little water and were built so fragile, so as to weigh as little as possible, and so go faster. [1]

[1] *Records*, pp. 208, 209.

The Baltic scheme, which involved the passage of British ships thither and the landing of a huge Russian army on the German coast, was Lord Fisher's pet idea. But being considered too hazardous, it never came to anything. Nor did an alternative project, which involved the seizure of one or other of the Frisian Islands with the idea of making the German fleet come out and give battle.

In January 1915, hostile airship attacks were being threatened upon London. The First Sea Lord, foreseeing a great catastrophe when their rain of bombs descended, was anxious to take a large number of hostages from the German civilians interned in this country, and to execute one of them for every civilian killed during an air-raid. Such an idea, which was little short of cold-blooded murder, could not be permitted in so-called ' civilised warfare ' ; but on January 4th Lord Fisher sent in his resignation ' because the Admiralty under present arrangements, will be responsible for the massacre coming suddenly upon and unprepared for by the public.'

Mr. Churchill was forced to remind him that he might be exaggerating the effects of an air-raid, and that the question of killing prisoners was not for the Admiralty, but for the Cabinet to decide. Lord Fisher, upon reconsideration, withdrew his resignation, and work proceeded as usual.

7

This is no place for a narrative of the events leading up to the campaign in the Dardanelles, or for the story of the Gallipoli adventure. From the outset, however, Lord Fisher, with his mind fixed upon the Baltic, was opposed to the project of forcing the Dardanelles with the Navy alone, though he was in general agreement with some sort of an offensive against Turkey.

At a meeting of the War Council on January 28th, 1915, where the question was discussed and he was the only dissentient to the scheme, it was decided, nevertheless, that the attempt should be made. He did not resign at the time, because, as he said later, he understood that there were overwhelming political reasons why there should be an effort to get the fleet through to Constantinople. He also felt it his duty to remain at the Admiralty to carry through his building programme.

Briefly, by using a number of older vessels, unsuited to work in the main theatre of war in the North Sea, the Admiralty was

to attempt, without the aid of troops, a gradual reduction of the formidable Dardanelles defence, in the hope of pushing ships through the Narrows into the Sea of Marmora and thence to Constantinople. If the venture succeeded and the capital city were paralysed, the Turkish Empire would be cut in two, the Balkan States would probably throw in their lot with the Allies, Serbia would be rescued, Russia assisted, and the war appreciably shortened. The stake, indeed, was a tremendous one, and seemed worth trying for.

For reasons which need not be entered into here, the purely naval attempts to force the Narrows, though they opened with a considerable degree of success, ended in failure. It was then decided to use troops to achieve the desired result by the more roundabout method of seizing the Gallipoli Peninsula. The first troops of the expeditionary force landed successfully on April 25th, and though they established themselves ashore at tremendous sacrifice, were unable to make any substantial advance inland in the face of the Turkish resistance.

Early in May, Lord Fisher had begun to show signs of strain and nervous exhaustion. 'There is no doubt,' says Mr. Churchill, 'that the old admiral was worried almost out of his wits by the immense pressure of the times, and by the course events had taken. He expected to be confronted with the demand he hated most and dreaded most, the renewal of the naval battle and fighting the matter out to a conclusion.'[1] Ships had already been lost, and the First Sea Lord foresaw the loss of many more if the forcing of the Straits were insisted upon before the army were in possession of the Peninsula. He feared further demands for naval co-operation, and had believed all along that men-of-war were not capable of silencing forts.

On the night of May 12th the old battleship *Goliath* was torpedoed and sunk in the Dardanelles by a Turkish destroyer, manned by Germans. This incident caused Lord Fisher to demand the immediate return of the *Queen Elizabeth*, a newly built battleship which had been trying out her new pattern 15-inch guns and mountings by working temporarily with the fleet in the Dardanelles. The First Lord agreed that she should be recalled, provided she was replaced by certain other vessels.

During the evening of May 13th, however, there was a conference at the Admiralty, attended by Mr. Churchill, Lord Kitchener, Lord Fisher, and other officers of high rank. The meeting was a stormy one, for, on hearing that the *Queen Elizabeth* was to be withdrawn, Lord Kitchener became

[1] *The World Crisis, 1911-1914*, p. 340.

extremely angry and protested vehemently at what he considered the desertion, at a very critical juncture, of the Army by the Navy. Lord Fisher became angrier still. 'The *Queen Elizabeth* would come home!' he declared. 'She would come home at once; she would come home that very night, or he would walk out of the Admiralty then and there!'[1]

The Secretary of State for War, when given the explanation that the other battleships and monitors being sent to relieve the *Queen Elizabeth* could equally well support the Army, became somewhat reassured. Our newest and finest battleship was recalled to home waters, and every sailor will agree that Lord Fisher was right in insisting upon it.

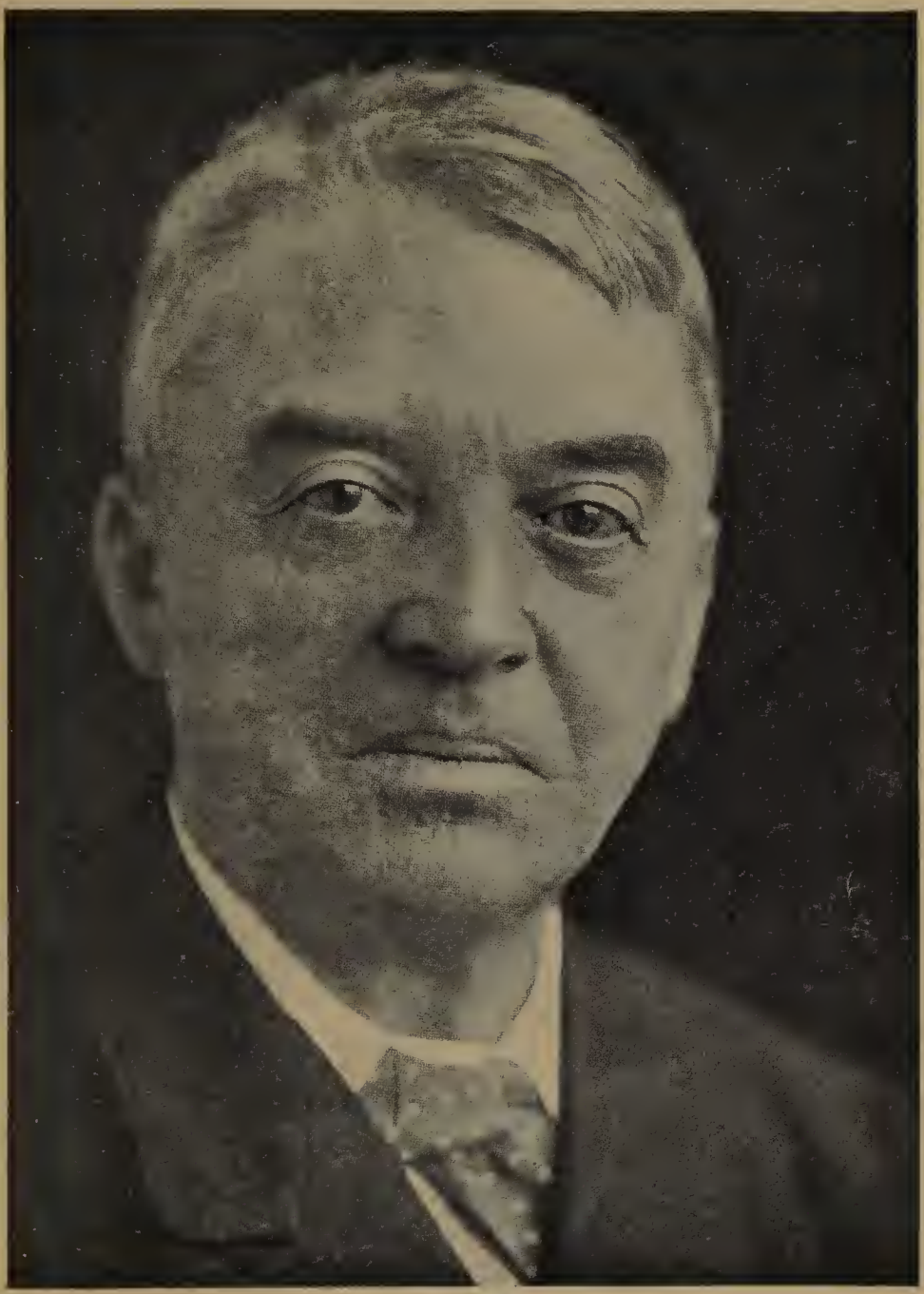
German submarines had already appeared in Turkish waters, and the First Sea Lord had realised that their advent must irresistibly increase naval losses. The Dardanelles coup, indeed, seemed doomed to failure, for the army ashore, though fighting desperately and with the greatest gallantry, could make no headway. If the campaign were persisted in, he visualised still further demands for naval reinforcements. The sending of these, he considered, would jeopardise the British naval supremacy in the decisive theatre of war.

At a meeting of the War Council on May 14th, Lord Fisher learnt that the idea of his favourite Baltic project was definitely abandoned, and at the same time declared, in no uncertain terms, that he had been against the Dardanelles adventure from the very beginning. That same evening Mr. Churchill told him that 'it was really not fair for him to obstruct the necessary steps at the Dardanelles, and then, if there was a failure, to turn round and say, "I told you so, I was always against it." He looked at me in an odd way and said, "I think you are right; it isn't fair."'[2]

Some days before, in order to encourage Italy to come into the war on the side of the Allies, Mr. Churchill and Lord Fisher, with, of course, the concurrence of the Cabinet, had arranged to send four British cruisers to Taranto. That same night—May 14th–15th—the First Lord, in the ordinary course of business, accelerated their departure by forty-eight hours. The necessary minute on the papers was marked 'First Sea Lord to see after action.'

Lord Fisher saw it early next morning. So far as he was concerned, it was the last straw. Orders, he considered, had been issued behind his back, though in simple justice to the First Lord, it must be said that he had no intention of

[1] *The World Crisis, 1911–1914*, p. 346. [2] *The World Crisis, 1915*, p. 357.



JOHN FISHER
BARON FISHER OF KILVERSTONE

[p. 250

undermining Lord Fisher's authority, or of going back upon the agreement entered into between them, whereby no executive action should be taken without previous discussion.

Lord Fisher, moreover, saw himself more and more embroiled in the enterprise in the Dardanelles. He saw Lord Kitchener, a field marshal, as Secretary of State for War and in supreme control of the military side of the war, while he, an admiral of the fleet, was more or less forced by a civilian First Lord to acquiesce in operations that he distrusted. His Baltic project was definitely put aside. That huge Russian army he visualised as landing on the Pomeranian coast for a stroke at the very heart of Germany, would never land, for the simple reason that the British Navy would never be allowed to afford it the necessary co-operation. It was for this Baltic project, let it be remembered, that Lord Fisher had flung himself heart and soul into his huge building programme. 'It seemed to me,' he afterwards wrote, 'that I was faced at last by a progressive frustration of my main scheme of naval strategy.'

So, on the morning of May 15th, he abruptly disappeared from the Admiralty, leaving a formal note for Mr. Churchill.

'After further anxious reflection, I have come to the regretted conclusion I am unable to remain any longer as your colleague. It is undesirable in the public interests to go into details—Jowett said, "never explain"—but I find it increasingly difficult to adjust myself to the increasing daily requirements of the Dardanelles to meet your views—as you truly said yesterday, I am in the position of continually veto-ing your proposals. This is not fair to you, besides being extremely distasteful to me. I am off to Scotland at once so as to avoid all questionings.'[1]

Lord Fisher was not to be found in the Admiralty building, and the First Lord saw the Prime Minister and reported what had happened. Mr. Asquith at once sent a written order commanding him in the name of His Majesty to return to his duty. Some hours later, when he was found, he 'refused point-blank to re-enter the Admiralty or to discharge any function.'[1]

A subsequent interview with the Prime Minister, and two friendly letters from Mr. Churchill, could not shake the old seaman in his determination.

'Our rupture will be profoundly injurious to every public interest . . .,' the First Lord wrote to Lord Fisher on May 15th.

[1] *The World Crisis, 1915*, p. 359.

'*You are bent on forcing the Dardanelles and nothing will turn you from it*—NOTHING——,' appeared in Lord Fisher's reply of the next day. '. . . I assure you it is only painful having further conversations. I have told the Prime Minister I will not remain. Nothing will turn me from it. You say, with much feeling, that it will be a very great grief to you to part from me —I am certain you know in your heart no one has ever been more faithful to you than I have since I joined you last October. *I have worked my very hardest.*'[1]

'Please don't wish to see me,' he repeated in another letter of the same date. 'I could say nothing, as I am determined not to. I know I am doing right.'

Lord Fisher's resignation, coinciding with the crisis brought about by the shortage of high-explosive shell on the Western Front, and the dissatisfaction of the Conservative party with the general conduct of the war, resulted in the formation of the Coalition Government and the appointment of Mr. Balfour as First Lord of the Admiralty in place of Mr. Churchill.

His 'impulsive, fatal act,'[2] in leaving the Admiralty as he did, was not only disturbing to the country, but also called forth considerable criticism upon himself. Yet his motives in doing so were neither personal nor unworthy. One feels convinced that he did not foresee that his abrupt resignation over a matter of war policy would contribute to a political upheaval. On the contrary, as things were, he honestly thought that he could only hamper further operations in the Dardanelles and be unfair to the First Lord by standing in his way, without being able to carry on the naval war in the manner that he, Lord Fisher, thought best.

And one can see, in his reiterated refusal to discuss the matter, a lurking fear that he might be manœuvred into a false position against his better judgment. He was not good at the logical presentation of an argument. The sequence of his ideas, as someone has said, 'expressed themselves in a series of verbal explosions.' Explanations were little in his line, and he dreaded the possibility of being talked and persuaded into acquiescence without agreement—an impossible state of affairs to a man of his temperament.

One sees, too, in this difference of opinion between Lord Fisher and Mr. Churchill, a difference, it should be said, that did not finally sever their friendship, the clash of two great wills. Both men had done magnificent work for the Navy and the country, and, on Mr. Churchill's retirement from the

[1] *The World Crisis, 1915*, p. 362. [2] *The World Crisis, 1915*, p. 382.

Admiralty becoming known, the veteran Admiral Sir Arthur Wilson, who had been at the Admiralty for some time, and had provisionally assumed the duties of First Sea Lord after Lord Fisher's resignation, wrote to the Prime Minister refusing to undertake the task under any new First Lord. Had this been made known at the time, a profound impression would have been made upon the naval service and the public. 'In no other way,' says Mr. Churchill, 'could the persistent accusations of rash, ignorant interference by the civilian Minister in the naval conduct of the war be decisively repelled.'[1]

It was shortly before Mr. Churchill's retirement from the Admiralty, moreover, that he received a formal farewell visit from Lord Kitchener. The Secretary of State for War spoke very kindly of their work together, and said on leaving : 'Well, there is one thing, at any rate, they cannot take from you. The Fleet was ready.'

8

On July 5th, 1915, Lord Fisher was appointed by Mr. Balfour to be Chairman of the Board of Invention and Research. This organisation included men eminent in every branch of science, working together to consider new inventions for war purposes, and, above all, to suggest means for combating the rapidly growing submarine menace.

In the middle of November, Mr. Churchill retired from the government, and on the 15th of that month made a statement in the House of Commons as to his administration as First Lord of the Admiralty, his connection with the war, and, above all, with the operations in the Dardanelles. While paying the late First Sea Lord the tribute that 'No man has ever been able to put war purpose into a ship like Lord Fisher,' he added, with regard to the Dardanelles, 'I did not receive from the First Sea Lord either the clear guidance before the event, or the firm support afterwards, that I was entitled to expect.'

Mr. Churchill's speech evoked a personal statement from Lord Fisher in the House of Lords on November 16th. 'Certain references were made to me, in a speech delivered yesterday by Mr. Churchill,' he said. 'I have been sixty-one years in the service of my country, and I leave my record in the hands of my countrymen. The Prime Minister said yesterday that Mr. Churchill said one or two things that he had better

[1] *The World Crisis, 1915*, p. 372.

not have said, and that he necessarily and naturally left unsaid some things which will have to be said. I am content to wait. It is unfitting to make personal explanations affecting national interests when my country is in the midst of a great war.'

Again, on March 21st, 1917, after the publication of the report of the Dardanelles Commission, he again made a short speech in the House of Lords : ' With your Lordships' permission, I desire to make a personal statement. When our country is in great jeopardy, as she now is, it is not the time to tarnish great reputations, to asperse the dead, and to discover our supposed weaknesses to the enemy ; so I shall not discuss the Dardanelles Report—I shall await the end of the war, when all the truth can be made known.'

In July, 1917, and February, 1918, Lord Fisher was again advocating his Baltic project in letters to his friends : ' Sow the North Sea with mines as thick as Vallombrosa ! That blocks effectually the Kiel Canal, if continued laying of these mines is always perpetually going on with damnable pertinacity ! Then I guarantee to force a passage into the Baltic in combination with a great Military co-operation. . . . It has got to be chiefly a Naval Job ! And the Army will be landed by the Navy ! The Navy will guarantee landing the Army on the Coast of Pomerania and elsewhere. Three feints, any of which can be turned into a Reality.' [1]

But mines alone could never have blocked the North Sea entrance to the Kiel Canal, and the passage to sea of the German High Sea Fleet could never have been denied by this measure alone. Each day, during the latter part of the war, channels, hundreds of miles long, were swept off the coasts of Britain, and what was done in British waters, could also be done in German. And for the reason that the Baltic project would have divided the British fleet into two detachments, one in the Baltic and the other in the North Sea, each weaker than the German fleet, the proposition was as strategically unsound as it was impracticable.

We need hardly quote Lord Fisher's famous letters and articles in *The Times* during 1919, in which he reiteratcd his famous slogan ' Sack the Lot ! ' One of his most amazing traits, however, was that, as he grew older, he became more revolutionary in his ideas. At the age of seventy-eight, as he was in 1919, he considered his original *Dreadnought* as a symbol of antiquity, and his oft-repeated ' Sack the Lot ! ' was not so much the expression of his personal displeasure with the Board

[1] *Records*, pp. 236, 237.

of Admiralty, as an expression of his conviction that existing ships were obsolete and must be replaced by others larger and more powerful still.

He died on July 10th, 1920, at the age of seventy-nine, having been predeceased by Lady Fisher two years before. He was succeeded by his only son, Cecil Vavasseur-Fisher, born in 1869, and left three daughters, all of whom were married to naval officers.

He was buried at Kilverstone, in Norfolk, after a public naval funeral at Westminster Abbey. As people in the streets heard the bands playing and watched the cortège go by, there were many who were convinced that they were witnessing the passing of the greatest sailor since Nelson.

9

It cannot be said that Lord Fisher was a lovable character to those outside his immediate circle. He was admired and respected on all sides for his immense driving power, his irreverence for tradition and custom, his quickness to realise ability in subordinates, and his vigorous personality. But to most junior officers and to men on the lower-deck, 'Jacky' was more of a gilded potentate than a human being like themselves—a rather terrible potentate of unlimited power, more like fiery old St. Vincent than Nelson, or, shall we say, the present Earl Jellicoe. At the time, one heard little of those unobtrusive acts of kindness, which, bandied from mouth to mouth, go so far towards making a leader loved. Gentleness was not in his nature. Those who voiced their objections to what he did, those who stood in his way, those who even dared to differ in opinion, were ruthlessly, remorselessly, and relentlessly crushed and cast aside. His enemies he treated with revengeful hostility, and sometimes he could be monstrously unfair.

Yet he did unbend on occasions. As commander-in-chief of the Mediterranean in the *Renown* he used to walk up and down the quarter-deck with the midshipmen of the watch, telling them stories of the old Navy, and letting them see that he took a personal interest in their welfare. At Bermuda he asked them to picnics and dances, and there is the true tale of a seaman who was badly injured by a flying hawser while he was inspecting a destroyer at evolutions. Not content with immediately sending the bleeding man to hospital in his barge, he visited him afterwards with little comforts and parcels

of books. Acts like these are not performed by men without kindness of heart.

He was a vigorous writer with a flair for coining the burning phrase that lights up the truth from within ; but he could not argue a point, and, as said Major-General Sir C. E. Callwell, was ' less likely to impress a crowd of dialecticians in session, than are the generality of naval and military officers.' [1]

He was an indefatigable worker, a worker, let it be said, rather inclined to meddle in the business of others. Thanks largely to his mighty efforts, however, the men and ships of the Royal Navy were prepared for the war which he rightly regarded as inevitable. It is surprising to think, however, that no comprehensive naval war plans in the event of hostilities with Germany had ever been really considered. There was a complete absence of co-operation with the War Office, and no Naval Staff, as there was in the Army, to work out and to explore the function of the fleet as part and parcel of the fighting forces of the Empire in carrying out the main strategy of the war.

Lord Fisher has been called a materialist. His enemies accused him of exaggerating the importance of the material side of naval power at the expense of the moral and intellectual, and not without reason.

Immersed in the technicalities of his profession—his great reforms, his re-distribution of the fleet, the creation of new ships and weapons—he literally had no time to devote himself to a profound study as to how the Navy could best be used as an instrument of war. No war plan that existed in his brain had ever been considered in all its aspects or worked out. It was repugnant to him to delegate power to others, and that comparatively junior officers, in a considered staff opinion, should voice their opinions as to the conduct of war. He preferred to do his own thinking. Therefore, no War Staff worthy of the name existed.

Megalomania, indeed, was carried too far. As First Sea Lord, Lord Fisher was the Royal Navy and the Royal Navy was Lord Fisher. Woe betide anyone in the Service who thought otherwise, or dared to combat his opinions : ' Their children should be fatherless, their wives widows, their homes dunghills.'

He had raised himself to the topmost heights of his profession by his own unaided efforts. Thanks to a press campaign, dating back to the 'eighties, he had become almost an idol

[1] *Stray Recollections*, 1923.

in the eyes of the public. His dourness, his trenchant sayings and letters to the Press, his air of the bluff old sea-dog, his tremendous energy and forceful personality, the sweeping reforms with which his name was associated, endeared him to the man in the street. Britannia still ruled the waves. People might sleep safely in their beds so long as 'Jacky' was in a position of authority at Whitehall. Those whose opinions differed from his were fools and nincompoops.

His prescience at times amounted almost to second sight. Nine-tenths of what he did was undoubtedly right, and his force and driving power were immense. But he was no strategist. As First Sea Lord before the war, he had, at one period, divided the fleet in home waters into two portions—the Channel Fleet, and a smaller detachment at the Nore. The latter was weaker than the German High Seas Fleet, and thus, in the event of sudden hostilities, was open to attack and possible defeat in detail before the Channel Fleet could arrive upon the scene. This, in itself, was a violation of one of the first principles of war—that of the concentration of strength in the vital area. Again, during the war, seemingly oblivious to the effect of submarines, torpedoes, and mines, his ideas of the conduct of naval war against Germany seemed largely based upon those of a century before—a close blockade of the Heligoland Bight, with the possible seizure of an advanced base close to the enemy's coast, and the landing of parcels of troops with the idea of diverting German troops from their main fighting line elsewhere.

In short, he seemed to contemplate a partial repetition of the methods employed during the blockade of the French fleet in Toulon and Brest during the Napoleonic wars, or those employed by the Japanese Admiral Togo before Port Arthur in 1904–5. Close blockade would not have commended itself to a thinker conversant with the principles of war and familiar with the use of modern weapons at sea.

It was Mr. Winston Churchill who merits the gratitude of the Navy for his inception of a thinking branch for the Sea Service, otherwise the institution of a Naval Staff College for the production of a corps of staff officers, trained in the art and principles of war. This was not the least of the measures he so energetically carried through during his term of office as First Lord of the Admiralty. Nevertheless, it was only carried through in the face of determined opposition from certain sea officers of the older school like the late Sir Arthur Wilson, who believed that a War Staff was not only undesirable but unnecessary.

Mr. Churchill, more than any other man, took the first steps 'to give the Royal Navy that widely extended outlook upon war problems and of war situations, without which, seamanship, gunnery, instrumentalisms of every kind, devotion of the highest order, could not achieve their just reward in war.'[1]

Lord Fisher was vouchsafed no opportunity of commanding a fleet in battle. No great victory at sea, except the battle of the Falklands, can be traced to his influence or inspiration. Yet he was largely responsible for forging the weapon which, operating as a fleet from Scapa Flow and the Firth of Forth, in the grey, inhospitable welter of the North Sea throughout the war of 1914–18, stood between the Central Powers and victory. Without that fleet, British troops could neither have been landed in France in safety, nor reinforcements from any one of the great Dominions or the United States have been guaranteed a safe passage to any oversea theatre of hostilities. The war was won on the Western Front, but the British fleet, by maintaining the integrity of the sea communications and so ensuring the safe passage of troops and munitions, and of foodstuffs, without which we should have been brought to starvation, was the hub upon which, not only the British, but the entire Allied cause revolved.

It was Sea Power, and Sea Power alone, that made it possible for our armies ashore to bring hostilities to a triumphant conclusion.

'We are just back after taking part in the most wonderful episode in the war, and my heart is very full,' runs a letter from one of Lord Fisher's naval admirers, quoted in *Records*. 'And I feel that the extraordinary surrender of the flower of the German fleet is so much due to your marvellous work and insight—in giving England the fleet she has—that I must write to you! . . . Had I been in a private ship, I would have used every endeavour to get you up to see the final fulfilment of your life's work. . . . But history will give you your due.'

The final fulfilment of his life's work!

One feels glad that the old seaman lived to see November 21st, 1918, when the High Seas Fleet, its guns trained fore and aft, and shcpherded by the British Grand Fleet, steamed abjectly in to its anchorage in the Firth of Forth.

His labours had not been in vain.

[1] *The World Crisis, 1911–1914*, p. 93.

LORD CHARLES BERESFORD
BARON BERESFORD OF
METEMMEH AND CURRAGHMORE
Admiral
1846–1919

LORD CHARLES BERESFORD

I

'It is wiser to administer a fleet by *commendation* than by *condemnation*. If commendation is given for good and smart actions, condemnation for bad, slackness becomes far more severely condemned, and no sympathy for it is aroused.

'Any smart action performed by an officer or man should be appreciated publicly by signal. This is complimentary to the officer or man and to the ship in which he is serving at the time. Everyone is grateful for appreciation.

'The old style in the Navy was never to commend anything that was well done ; to do well was considered to be no more than a man's duty. On the other hand, anything that was badly done led to severe reprimands.

'When a good officer or man knows that the admiral appreciates his work, it cheers the fleet and raises its whole tone. It is right to be severe on those who do their work lazily or badly ; but it is quite as necessary to appreciate those who do their work well.'

The passage quoted is taken from a chapter headed 'The Making of an Admiral,' contained in *The Memoirs of Lord Charles Beresford*, written by himself and published in two volumes in 1914.

Lord Charles Beresford, or, to give him the full title by which he was raised to the peerage in 1916, Baron Beresford of Metemmeh and Curraghmore, was probably the most popular British admiral afloat during the first decade of the present century. His name first came prominently before the public in connection with the bombardment of Alexandria on July 11th, 1882, where, as commander of the gunboat *Condor*, a tiny vessel of 780 tons, he dodged the shoals, took his ship to a position within close range of the flank of the formidable Fort Marabout, where its heavy guns could not be brought to bear and, pouring in a heavy fire, silenced the weapons that were seriously annoying the heavier ships farther out.

This stirring incident, which earned the public commendation of the commander-in-chief, Admiral Sir Frederick Beauchamp Seymour—afterwards Lord Alcester—has been described and illustrated time and time again. Though in comparison with deeds of the Great War it fades into comparative insignificance, it was a gallant, dashing feat, with that touch of dare-devilry which always appeals to the public appetite.

Less than three years later, during the war in the Soudan, Lord Charles Beresford again came prominently into notice for his courageous rescue of Sir Charles Wilson and his party at Wad Habeshi, on the Nile, within forty miles of Khartoum, where a small British force was cut off by an overwhelming host of dervishes. The story of this exploit, which was carried out in a crazy little river steamer called the *Safieh*, will be told in its proper place ; but again it was a deed which appealed to the popular imagination, and was typical of Lord Charles's resourcefulness and personal gallantry in difficult and most dangerous circumstances.

' There is nothing,' he writes in his book, ' quite so dead as dead politics.' In 1874, however, while still a lieutenant, he was elected member of Parliament for County Waterford, retaining the seat until 1880. It was in 1885, when elected for East Marylebone, that he started his naval crusade in the House, and thereafter made it his duty to awaken public opinion to the danger in which the country stood on account of the general unpreparedness and inadequacy of the Navy for war. The addition to the fleet in 1889 of seventy modern vessels, at a cost of £21,500,000 by what is popularly known as the Naval Defence Act, was due in no small measure to his efforts in Parliament. His opinions at times brought him into conflict with the Board of Admiralty, but he was luckier than most naval officer-politicians in that he possessed an adequate private income, and was thus independent of the Service as a means of livelihood.

Lord Charles Beresford had not the immense driving power of Lord Fisher, who was his superior in the Service and five years his senior in point of age. His methods were more polite and gentle than those of his fiery colleague. Even if reproof had to be given, Lord Charles believed in being suave in his manner, and, if possible, in sending a delinquent away with a smile rather than with a scowl.

By that much-maligned person, the man in the street, he was considered the ideal of what a naval officer should be—

gallant and courageous, bluff, hearty, and what is generally known as 'breezy.' And so he undoubtedly was. An aristocrat with polished manners, he was also an enthusiastic sportsman, and had the look of a typical sailor—stocky, with square shoulders and the slightly rolling gait, the firm mouth and determined chin, the far-seeing eyes which no detail seemed to escape. As an admiral he was rarely at sea without the bull-dog with which his caricatures invariably showed him.

By the officers and men under his command 'Charlie B.,' as he was affectionately called, was truly beloved for his kindliness of heart, his care and forethought for their well-being. Except in a limited sense he was no great technician, but had a thorough grasp of all the complexities of naval life and excelled in the art of pure seamanship.

He was popular. People remembered his exploits at Alexandria and in the Soudan, and knew him for a good fighter. He bore a great name, and had fought the battles of the Navy in the House of Commons. Many were the stories told of him in his younger days. Added to his natural charm of manner and courtliness, these attributes made him a public character and something of a popular hero.

I have seen many elections, but never have I witnessed a scene of such wild enthusiasm as when, in 1910, Lord Charles Beresford and Mr. Falle were elected as Members of Parliament for the naval constituency of Portsmouth. When the result was declared late in the evening the Town Hall square was packed with a throng of cheering people, containing a goodly proportion of men in naval uniform. The trams had to stop running, and, after their speeches, the successful candidates had literally to be carried to their car over the heads of the multitude. A narrow passage cleared by the police, they drove slowly off amidst shouts of 'Good old Charlie B. !' : bluejackets clinging on to the wings and running-boards, blue-jackets spread-eagled precariously on the sagging roof, and Lord Charles, himself, leaning out of the window, his face a mixture of concern and good-natured amusement, vainly endeavouring to dislodge them with his umbrella.

'Good old Charlie B. !'—the sailor's idol, lately commander-in-chief of the Mediterranean and Channel Fleets, was member of Parliament for Portsmouth, the premier naval port of the Empire, and Portsmouth was not behindhand in showing its appreciation.

2

Lord Charles William de la Poer Beresford was born at Philipstown Glebe, Louth, on February 10th, 1846. He was the second of five brothers, sons of Sir John de la Poer Beresford, Dean and Prebendary of Mullaghbrack in the Arch-diocese of Armagh, who in 1843 had married Christina, the daughter of Charles Powell-Leslie.

In 1859, on the death through an accident in the hunting-field of his elder brother Henry, third Marquess of Waterford, the Reverend Sir John succeeded to the marquisate and the family estate at Curraghmore, some twelve miles west of Waterford. Here, during their boyhood, the brothers became keen sportsmen and hard riders to hounds. Even their mother, who did not learn to ride until she was between forty and fifty years of age, soon became a noted horsewoman.

Throughout the winter the great house was filled with guests. With hunting six days a week there were sometimes as many as a hundred horses in the stables. Often during his service afloat as a midshipman, Lord Charles would think with envy of his younger brothers, each with his three hunters.

Charles, with two of his brothers, was sent to Bayford School, in England, at a very early age. Thence he went to another school at Deal, where, in 1858, he saw the Channel Fleet of old-fashioned, three-decker line-of-battleships at anchor in the Downs. The admiral being a friend of his father's, he had, for a small boy, the supreme honour of being invited on board the flagship. From Deal he went on to Fareham as a pupil of the Reverend Mr. Foster of Stubbington House, a school which made a great name for itself for boys entering the Navy, and still flourishes.

It had been decided that he should enter the Navy because he needed discipline and was supposed to be delicate, though how the hard life in the gun-room of those days could benefit a really sickly lad, it is difficult to imagine. It was generally a case of kill or cure. However, on December 12th, 1859, he passed the somewhat cursory examination for naval cadet, and, wearing his uniform for the first time, joined the training ship *Britannia*, at that time moored at the entrance to Haslar Creek in Portsmouth Harbour.

For the next fifteen months he learned the rudiments of his new profession, until, on March 28th, 1861, he was appointed to the *Marlborough*, which had been ordered to commission

as the flagship of Vice-Admiral Sir William Fanshawe Martin, commander-in-chief in the Mediterranean.

The *Marlborough* was an old three-decker line-of-battleship dating from 1835 and afterwards fitted with single-screw horizontal engines. Here, for the next two years, Lord Charles learnt the art of seamanship from senior officers and men who had actually served with Nelson's captains. The change from sails to steam was just beginning. By the older generation of seamen, however, the new-fangled engines and boilers were regarded as inventions of the Evil One. The order to raise steam was never given except in emergency, and then cast a gloom over the entire ship, while the unfortunate chief engineer was constantly sent for to be forcibly reminded that the smoke emanating from the telescopic funnel sullied the masts and yards, and marred the virginal whiteness of the well-scrubbed and holystoned decks. The Navy, though very wise, is also intensely conservative. One remembers that even in 1902, and possibly later, battleships and cruisers used still to swathe their masts and yards in canvas 'steaming covers' before going to sea, lest the sacred paintwork aloft should be defiled by funnel-smoke.

In the early 'sixties, however, proficiency in sail drill and evolutions of all sorts were regarded as the essence of smartness, and in his memoirs Lord Charles describes how in the *Marlborough* they could cross topgallant and royal yards in thirty seconds ; shift topgallant masts from royal yards across in five minutes forty seconds, and so on. The men aloft, and the midshipmen who worked with them, became as nimble as cats ; scampering about the rigging, hanging on by their eyelids with spars and ropes moving about in all directions, even running in along the yards without holding on while the ship was rolling. The men went barefooted, their feet becoming so horny and calloused that they could not wear boots without positive discomfort. It was no rare thing to see their footgear slung round their necks when ashore.

Gunnery was regarded as quite a secondary art to seamanship. It was considered that any sort of fool could load and fire a gun, whereas it required a real seaman to do his work aloft. Hitting the enemy at the close range at which ships were expected to fight was a matter of comparative ease, and most of the *Marlborough's* guns were old-fashioned muzzle-loaders on truck mountings, of the style that had been in use in the Service long before the days of Nelson. And there was no great difference between the guns used in the Elizabethan Navy

and those of 1805, while in 1861 target practice was still carried out at a cliff at a range of no more than a hundred yards.

But discipline was more or less lax and punishments severe. Men were flogged for the smallest offences, and thought little of it. Leave was granted very rarely, with the consequence that when they did get ashore they very seldom returned until they had spent every penny of their hard-earned pay. Drunkenness was fashionable, the hall-mark of hard-bitten sailormen, and those who were not genuinely intoxicated when they returned to the ship gave a very tolerable imitation of being in that state lest their shipmates should regard them as peculiar.

Life afloat was hard and full of discomfort. Rations were inadequate in quality and quantity—for the most part hard biscuit, and salt beef and pork so tough that it could not be cooked and eaten until after many hours' soaking. The men habitually chewed tobacco to alleviate their hunger, an example which was followed by the midshipmen. Nobody was a sailor who could not 'spit brown.'

But in spite of the hard life and the absence of proper food, the men became extraordinarily hardy. The constant running aloft tautened and developed their muscles in a way that no other exercise could ever do, and the British men-of-warsmen of the 'sixties, drunken old scallywags though many of them were, were the hardest-bitten seamen and finest fighting material in the world. They feared nothing.

Ordered home to England early in 1863, Lord Charles was appointed to the *Defence*, one of the new iron-built, armoured, heavily-rigged, steam vessels at that time being built for the Navy. After the *Marlborough* he thought her a dreadful ship, 'a slovenly, unhandy tin kettle which could not sail without steam ; which had not even any royal-masts ; and which took minutes instead of seconds to cross topgallant yards, a disgusting spectacle to a midshipman of the *Marlborough*.'

The ship belonged to the Channel Squadron, which spent most of its time cruising round the British Isles, and it was in this vessel, in 1863, when lying in the Mersey, that Lord Charles dived into the water and rescued a visitor who had fallen overboard from the gangway, for which he was awarded the gold medal of the Liverpool Shipwreck and Humane Society, as well as the bronze medal of the Royal Humane Society. A short time later, he again received a medal from the latter society for his gallantry in rescuing a man in Plymouth Sound.

He seems to have indulged in the usual pranks of midshipmen, and on one occasion got himself into trouble at Plymouth

when pea-shooting with some other wild youngsters from the outside of a cab. Unfortunately he hit a lady in the face, and, chased by the gentleman with whom she was walking, eventually found himself in the police station. Haled up before the magistrates the next morning he was fined £3 10*s.* and costs, with the alternative of five weeks' imprisonment. 'I hope you will look upon it as a boyish lark and not as a disgraceful action,' he said in writing to his father. 'And will you send me five pounds as I have but three shillings left ; and I must have some money to pay mess, wine, etc., etc?' By reason of Lord Charles' name and its associations, the incident, which was trumpery enough, was unduly magnified by the Press.

After less than a year in the *Defence*, in which he was never really happy, he was appointed senior midshipman of the corvette *Clio*, a sailing vessel with auxiliary steam. Leaving Portsmouth in August 1864, the ship crossed the line and visited Ascension, and thence proceeded to the Falkland Islands, at the time mainly inhabited by ex-Royal Marines and their families. Sailing on through the Straits of Magellan, where she encountered a hurricane, the *Clio* visited Valparaiso and then the Sandwich Islands, whence she took Queen Emma to Panama on her way to visit Queen Victoria. The natives, who loved their ruler, loaded the ship with pigs, masses of yams, sweet potatoes, water-melons and other fruit, which latter were piled on the rigging and hammock nettings until the vessel looked like 'an agricultural show.' Incidentally, a large water-melon fell upon Lord Charles's head from a height of eighteen feet, and nearly knocked him senseless. Bursting like a shell, it deluged him with red pulp, which, for the moment, he thought was the inside of his skull.

The American civil war was raging at the time, and for some reason those on board the *Clio* favoured the South. And it was at a ball in the Sandwich Islands that a lady bet Lord Charles that he would not remove the escutcheon bearing the stars and stripes, fixed up over the garden door of the American consulate. Rather foolishly he accepted the wager, and, at dead of night, with two other midshipmen, went to the consulate and removed the shield, which he took on board. The American consul, discovering who had committed the outrage, insisted upon the escutcheon being replaced, and Lord Charles, with a couple of carpenters, was sent ashore by his captain's orders to replace the insulted emblem. The prank, as he himself observes, might have brought about international complications.

After six months at Vancouver, Beresford, in December 1865, was sent to the *Tribune*, a 'jackass frigate' commanded by Lord Gillford, afterwards the Earl of Clanwilliam. Reputed to be one of the finest seamen in the service, he prided himself, not only upon the smartness of his ship, but also of her speed under sail. Nothing would ever induce him to raise steam, nor could he be persuaded to take in sail in heavy weather until the very last moment. He saw to it that his midshipmen were thoroughly taught the practical side of seamanship, and Lord Charles tells how he worked under the sailmaker in a canvas jumper and trousers made by himself, roping a jib and other fore and aft sails, being hoisted aloft to repair frayed seams in the sails to avoid unbending them, and putting new clews into a topsail and a course.

Promoted to acting sub-lieutenant on about his nineteenth birthday, he was transferred to the steam frigate *Sutlej*, flagship of Rear-Admiral the Hon. Joseph Denman, who for five and twenty years had been comfortably in command of the Queen's yacht.

The captain of the *Sutlej*, tall and thin, hook-nosed and elderly, was a 'taut hand' and a fine seaman, though a fierce martinet. Lord Charles, as an acting sub-lieutenant, was mate of the upper deck, and nothing was ever clean enough for Captain Coode. The lines of black and white on the hull had to meet with absolute accuracy, otherwise there was trouble.

After further visits to Valparaiso, Vancouver, and San Francisco, where the ship was refitted and the men took the opportunity of deserting in shoals, the *Sutlej* was ordered home and Lord Charles was sent to the *Excellent*, the gunnery school ship, then moored in the upper part of Portsmouth Harbour. His courses finished, he was appointed in 1867 to the *Research*, a wooden vessel converted into an armour-clad during construction. Stationed at Holyhead he seems to have spent his leisure in hunting.

He next went to the royal yacht, whence, in 1868, he was promoted to lieutenant and appointed to the wooden steam-frigate *Galatea*, commanded by Captain H.R.H. the Duke of Edinburgh, the second son of Queen Victoria, then aged twenty-four. In the same ship the Duke had already visited South Africa and Australia, but, leaving Plymouth in November 1868, the *Galatea* now made another extended cruise which lasted for two and a half years. It is unnecessary to describe it in any detail; but in the course of her voyage she visited Cape Town, Australia, New Zealand, Tahiti, the Sandwich

Islands, Japan, China, Manila, Calcutta, Ceylon, Mauritius, and the Falkland Islands, before reaching England again in 1871. The cruise, which was an interesting one, was something in the nature of a royal progress from port to port, for everywhere the *Galatea* went the Duke was received as the son of the Queen of England, while the officers were lavishly entertained.

On his return to England Lord Charles was appointed flag-lieutenant to Admiral (afterwards admiral of the fleet) the Hon. Sir Henry Keppel, commander-in-chief at Plymouth. At that time there was no regulation forbidding naval officers to sit in Parliament, a dual position which had frequently been held by members of the Board of Admiralty, so in 1872 he stood as a candidate in the Kerry election which was fought entirely on the Home Rule issue. He was defeated by 839 votes.

In 1873, while still flag-lieutenant, he commanded the gunvessel *Goshawk* during manœuvres, and the next year, after a few months' service in the *Bellerophon* on the North America and West Indies station, came home and stood for Waterford at the request of his elder brother. His opponents were Mr. J. Esmonde and Mr. Longbottom, the latter of whom stood for Home Rule and was described as 'the Friend of the People.'

The election had its amusing side. A certain parish priest, who was also a Home Ruler, addressed his congregation on Sunday morning from his pulpit as follows :

" Now boys, a few words about th' election that's pending. First of all, if ye have a vote ye'd give it to a genuine Home Ruler, if ye had one standing. Ye have not. Secondly, ye'd give it to a good Conservative, if ye had one standing. Well ye have one in Lord Char-less Beresford, the gr-reat say-captain. And thirdly, ye'd vote for the Divil, but ye'd never vote for a whig. But as for this Mr. Long-what's-'is-name, I wudn't be dhirtying me mouth by mentioning the latter end of him."

A supporter of one of Lord Charles's opponents, however, retorted by urging the boys to " Kape the bloody Beresford out, for the Beresfords were never known to shmile except when they saw their victims writhin' on th' gibbet," a reference to a previous Beresford who had been First Commissioner of Revenue on the passing of the Act of Union.

Stopping at a country inn late at night Lord Charles saw a billposter pasting his opponent's placards on the wall of a building and engaged him in conversation.

"'Tis a grand occupation," he observed. " Vote for

Longbottom, the Friend of the People, and to hell with Lord Char-less."

"To hell with Lord Char-less!" the man agreed.

"Let me show ye the way to paste bills, ye omadhaun," said Lord Charles.

"And what do ye know about pasting bills?" the man queried.

Assuring him that he had been a bill-poster all his life, Beresford possessed himself of the brush and pail of evil-smelling paste and plastered up a bill as though he had always done it for his living.

"Sure," said the bill-poster looking on. "Ye can paste bills with any man that God ever put two legs under. 'Tis clear ye're a grand bill-poster."

"Didn't I tell ye?" said Lord Charles, suddenly flicking the man across the face with the full brush, which caused him to turn and run away. Starting off in pursuit with the pail and brush, however, Beresford tripped over his overcoat and fell headlong, which caused his nose to bleed all over him. He had to go back to the inn, whence, with the captured placards, brush, and pail, he presently drove home, arriving very late. His brother William was in bed and fast asleep; but, creeping into his bedroom, Lord Charles decorated the walls, the door, the bed, the towels, the floor, even the fraternal trousers, with green bills emblazened with 'Vote for Longbottom, the Friend of the People.' Then he retired to bed.

The next morning Lord William came into his brother's room with a very long face.

"Charlie," he said. "There are some bold men among the enemy."

"What do you mean?" asked Lord Charles.

"They are great boys," the other replied. "Why, one of them got into my room last night. When I woke this morning I thought I had gone mad!"

Lord Charles eventually captured the seat by a majority of 377; but what with personal combats, stone-throwing, and stormy meetings, Irish elections of 1874 were more exciting than they are nowadays.

Once in the House, he confined himself principally to Service questions, and in 1875 was appointed naval aide-de-camp to the Prince of Wales, afterwards King Edward, for his visit to India and Ceylon. The Prince, with his suite, left England in October 1875, and embarked in H.M. Troopship *Serapis*, at Brindisi. On the way out he visited the King of Greece and

the Khedive, and eventually arrived at Bombay on November 8th. 'Thenceforward,' as Lord Charles Beresford says in his memoirs, 'the Prince's tour was an unresting progress of Durbars, receptions, dinners, visits, processions, ceremonies, speeches, addresses, fireworks, entertainments, investitures, reviews, varied only by intervals of sport.'

Among the many Babu poems [*sic*] composed to commemorate the Prince's prowess as a hunter during the tour was the following :

> Beautifully he will shoot
> Many a royal tiger brute ;
> Laying on their backs they die,
> Shot in the apple of the eye.

Embarking again at Bombay in March 1876, the royal traveller sailed for home, and landed in England in May after a further visit to the Khedive, calls at Malta and Gibraltar, and visits to the Kings of Spain and of Portugal.

It was during this tour, in November 1875, that Lord Charles Beresford was promoted to the rank of commander. His age was twenty-nine, and he was undoubtedly a fine seaman and a capable officer. The son of a marquess, however, possessed of ample private means, and with unlimited influence in high places, there is no doubt he had enjoyed exceptional advantages. Not only had he served in good appointments, but through his service in the *Galatea* and as aide-de-camp to the Prince of Wales, had come into intimate touch with royalty.

Fortune, indeed, had smiled upon him. His life had lain in very pleasant places, and throughout his career he had experienced little of the drudgery, and none of the heart-breaking poverty, experienced by those who, like Lord Fisher, entered the Navy without either influence or a penny with which to bless themselves beyond their meagre pay.

3

In 1876, still a Member of Parliament, Lord Charles was appointed second-in-command of the *Thunderer*, one of the new twin-screw ironclads with four heavy muzzle-loading guns in two turrets. This vessel, which was belted with 14-inch armour along the water-line, was one of the first ships of the Navy not to be fitted with sails. Nothing of great interest occurred while he served in her.

In the year 1878 he married Miss Jeromina Gardner,

daughter of the late Member of Parliament for Leicester, and soon afterwards was appointed to command the royal yacht *Osborne*, a small paddle-vessel commissioned for a few months in each year for the use of the Prince of Wales, afterwards King Edward VII. Several cruises were made to Denmark and there were many shooting expeditions, and, on one such occasion, he recalls that of the eleven persons present he was the only one who was not either a king or an heir to a throne.

It was the custom in those days to retain the officers in the royal yachts for very long periods. One had actually been in the *Osborne* for fourteen years, and Lord Charles suggested to the Prince of Wales that it would improve his acquaintance with the officers of the fleet if the time spent in the yacht were limited to two years. The Prince agreed, but Queen Victoria was a little perturbed, and hoped that the innovation would not be extended to the royal yacht used by herself, the *Victoria and Albert*.

"I am an old woman now," she explained. "I like to see faces I know about me, and not to have to begin again with new ones."

While still in the *Osborne*, Lord Charles lost his seat for Waterford in the general election of 1880. The next year he was anxious to obtain another seagoing command, and on December 31st, 1881, was appointed in command of H.M.S. *Condor*, a composite, sloop-rigged gunboat of 780 tons, belonging to the Mediterranean Fleet. That trouble was brewing in Egypt and there seemed a chance of active service, probably had something to do with the appointment. He had ample opportunity of pulling the right strings.

In the previous autumn, Arabi Pasha, a colonel of the Egyptian army, sought to rid Egypt of foreign rule by setting up a Nationalist dictatorship. Towards the end of the year, M. Gambetta, the French Prime Minister, drafted a strongly-worded note in which he announced that France and Britain together would protect the Khedive's government. This note was agreed to and signed by the British government; but when M. Gambetta left office early in 1882, his successor was by no means so anxious to interfere in the affairs of Egypt.

The British government, at the same time, declared that their prime interest in Egypt lay in the Suez Canal. As the safety of the Canal did not seem to be in question, however, there was no cause for immediate action. But both governments sent squadrons to Alexandria to watch proceedings,

and among these vessels was Lord Charles Beresford's little *Condor*.

Arabi's power, meanwhile, had grown, and, under Nationalist pressure, the Khedive, who might have nipped the movement in the bud if he had shown firmness, was forced to create Arabi Minister of War, which gave him virtual control of the army. By the early days of June, 1882, indeed, Arabi, supported by the Egyptian army and popular sentiment, was the military dictator, while the Khedive, though still nominally ruler, was deprived of all power and went in terror of his life. Egypt was on the verge of rebellion. The situation of Europeans in the country became perilous. Revolts might break out at any moment, with consequent mob-rule and massacre.

Great Britain and France, the two foreign powers most interested, each mistrusted the other and were unwilling to take firm action. And on Sunday, June 11th, the expected bloodshed came in the shape of a Nationalist rising at Alexandria, during which fifty Europeans were killed and many more wounded.

But still Britain and France took no steps, though in England the Conservative party, then in opposition with Lord Salisbury as their leader, called loudly for a declaration of war upon Arabi and his followers. British subjects, said the Conservatives, had been butchered under the very guns of a fleet, which, tied by orders from the government at home, had not ' budged an inch to save them.' Nevertheless, in spite of the clamour, Mr. Gladstone, the Prime Minister, and Lord Granville, the Foreign Secretary, did nothing.

Lord Charles Beresford was on intimate terms with the Prince of Wales and corresponded regularly with him. Firm in his conviction that Arabi's insurrection was really serious, he had already informed the Prince that, unless it were speedily and forcibly suppressed, Britain's position in Egypt and her hold on the Suez Canal were doomed. Chafing at the passivity of the home government, which declined to listen to the representations of the men on the spot, Lord Charles also told his royal patron that he had sent an account of the state of affairs to the *Morning Post*, the Conservative organ, which was doing its best to inflame public opinion against the apathy of the Liberal Government.

The Prince of Wales also regarded the situation with grave concern, and, anxious to stir up the government, was persuaded by a friend to forward Lord Charles's letters to the Foreign

Secretary. The true facts becoming publicly known, something of a commotion immediately ensued.

Lord Charles had done nothing wrong in writing privately to the Prince. He had, however, flagrantly disobeyed the naval regulations in writing to the Press, and had certainly been unwise in informing the Prince that he had done so. It placed the government in a very awkward situation, and Lord Granville—the Foreign Secretary—concentrating his attention upon a naval officer's admitted infringement of the rule of the Service, replied to the Prince that he had drawn the attention of his colleagues in the Cabinet to Beresford's offence, and requested him 'to let Lord Charles Beresford know of your disapprobation of the thing and of having informed Your Royal Highness of it.'[1]

The Prince admitted his friend's indiscretion and warned him against repeating it. At the same time, he regarded Lord Granville's disclosure to his colleagues of a private letter as a breach of confidence, and for a time relations between him and the Foreign Secretary were strained. As for Lord Charles Beresford, the Prince wrote on June 29th, 1882, asking Lord Granville to overlook the matter 'in justice to the great friendship and regard I feel for Beresford. . . . He is an Irishman, and in consequence hasty and impetuous, but I feel sure that the Queen does not possess a more zealous and loyal officer than he is, and as a rule a more punctilious observer of the regulations of the service.'[1]

The Prince's efforts were successful, Lord Charles was forgiven, though had he been an ordinary naval officer instead of one who was an intimate friend of royalty, the son of a marquess, and an ex-Member of Parliament, the incident would probably have resulted in a court-martial and the ruin of his professional career. Government does not readily forgive being forced into a line of action against its will by the act of one of its own servants, which, as a naval officer on full pay in command of a ship, Beresford was. The Prince's intervention alone saved him, though it 'tended on more than one future occasion,' as Sir Sidney Lee wrote in his biography of King Edward, 'to encourage his Irish friend's native impulse to air in the Press his political or professional views and grievances, to the embarrassment of colleagues or superiors.'[1]

The British government, meanwhile, forced at last to take action by the wave of public indignation which was sweeping

[1] *King Edward VII. A Biography*, Vol. I., p. 456.

the country, proceeded to answer Arabi's challenge to the safety of British interests in Egypt. The Channel Squadron was sent to the Mediterranean and two battalions to Cyprus, while at Alexandria the Navy helped to embark the refugees pouring out of the place. Arabi, however, still continued to fortify the coast defences and to bring Egyptian troops into the city.

A combined British and French fleet lay off Alexandria, the senior officer being Admiral Sir Beauchamp Seymour, with his flag in the *Alexandra*. Observing the work on the fortifications, the admiral, on about July 4th, protested against it. A couple of days later British subjects were warned to leave the country, and on July 9th Sir Beauchamp, in pursuance of orders from home, sent ashore an ultimatum threatening bombardment unless work on the forts ceased immediately, and the batteries were handed over to parties he proposed landing from the ships. The French fleet, acting under orders from Paris, had already left the anchorage.

Arabi paid no attention to the admiral's demand, and on July 10th all foreign men-of-war and merchant-vessels left the anchorage and the British fleet prepared for action. It consisted of fifteen vessels : the ironclads *Alexandra, Superb, Sultan, Temeraire, Inflexible, Monarch, Invincible*, and *Penelope*; the torpedo vessel *Hecla* ; the gunboats *Condor, Bittern, Beacon, Cygnet*, and *Decoy* ; and the despatch-vessel *Helicon*.

The coast fortifications of Alexandria extended over a front of rather more than nine miles, the twelve batteries mounting in all some 261 guns and mortars. The four most powerful battleships were ordered to deal with the batteries situated on the spit of land lying to the northward of the town, while the *Monarch, Invincible* and *Penelope*, of lighter draught, with the *Temeraire* in support, engaged those to the westward. The five gunboats were told off to act as repeating ships, and lay outside the inshore squadron to the westward, in which the admiral's flag was flying in the *Invincible*.

The gunboats, indeed, were to play rather a subsidiary part in the operations, and were ordered to keep out of range of the forts until an opportunity occurred of making themselves useful. This did not suit Lord Charles, and the evening before the battle he made his men a speech telling them that if they relied upon him to find the opportunity, he would rely upon them to make the most of it.

At dawn on July 11th the ships were under weigh and in their positions. The action began at 6.30 a.m. by the

Alexandra lobbing a shell into Fort Ada. In a moment the fighting became general.

Just as it started the *Temeraire* parted her cable and touched the ground. Lord Charles ran down to her in the *Condor*, and succeeded in towing her off, and, while doing so, noticed Fort Marabout, an outlying fort well to the westward which no ship could be spared to engage, 'giving pepper' to the *Monarch*, *Invincible*, and *Penelope*. All these three vessels were already in action. Not one of them could turn a gun on to Marabout, and, realising the difficulty, Lord Charles steamed down at full speed, and engaged the fort on the principle, as he said in a letter, 'that according to orders "an opportunity" had occurred.'

The *Condor's* largest weapon was a 64-pounder, while the fort mounted several 10-inch guns, one direct hit from which must inevitably sink the gunboat. But dodging the shoals, Lord Charles managed to take his ship close in to a position in which the larger guns in the fort could not be sufficiently depressed to hit her, and opened a heavy fire.

The admiral in the *Invincible* had just signalled to the *Monarch* to engage Fort Marabout as soon as she could be spared, when he heard the men cheering.

"What's that?" he asked.

He was told that the men were cheering the *Condor*.

"Good God!" he exclaimed, looking round to see the little gunboat close in to the fort, with shell splashes from its smaller guns leaping out of the water all round her. "Good God! She'll be sunk!"

At that moment the *Condor's* three guns were fired, each shell bursting in the battery. And instead of making her recall, as he had intended, Sir Beauchamp Seymour made 'Well done, *Condor*' at the suggestion of his flag-lieutenant, Hedworth Lambton (afterwards Admiral Sir Hedworth Meux).

For two and a half hours the *Condor* maintained her station, effectually drawing the fire from the inshore squadron and silencing all the guns of the fort except one. The enemy's smooth-bores rained shot on her in reply, but only two hit. Then the other small craft were sent in to assist. The *Condor* was eventually recalled, and Lord Charles, amid the cheers of the ship's companies, was sent for by the Admiral and publicly thanked upon the flagship's quarter-deck. According to eye-witnesses, the gunboat *Bittern* also deserved some share of the credit.

By 2 p.m. the whole of the fortifications had ceased firing

and were evidently abandoned by the enemy. To make certain, a party of one officer and ten men from the *Invincible*, covered by the gunboats, made their way ashore to one of the forts. They found only the dead, and after spiking or destroying the guns with gun-cotton, returned to their ship.

The bombardment had achieved its object, and at 5.30 the squadrons drew off and anchored for the night, with the trifling loss of six killed and twenty-eight wounded. None of the hostile shell had penetrated the ships' armour, though most of the vessels engaged had been several times hit, and had suffered a good deal of superficial though spectacular damage. The Egyptians, who stuck bravely to their guns under heavy fire, suffered great loss. Their shooting, however, was very poor, for the action, if we omit the *Condor's*, was fought at ranges varying between 1,600 and 3,400 yards, at which distance the larger vessels, steaming at slow speed, must have presented easy targets.

If we except the operations in China, ships of the Royal Navy had not been in action since the Crimean war, and the affair at Alexandria was the most spectacular naval fight since the destruction of the Turkish fleet at Navarino fifty-five years before. So the bombardment received its full share of notice in the British Press, while Lord Charles's skilful and courageous handling of the *Condor* at a critical moment brought his name prominently before the public and made him the hero of the day. That Mr. Moberley Bell, the war-correspondent of *The Times*, and Mr. Frederic Villiers, the artist war-correspondent, both happened to be aboard the *Condor* during the action, and, with their despatches and sketches, contributed towards making her name a byword with that of Lord Charles Beresford, in no way detracts from the great dash and gallantry with which the latter unhesitatingly took his little vessel into action.

During the night following the bombardment, the city of Alexandria was set on fire and looted by Arabi's retreating troops. Prior to their departure into the interior they also liberated the convicts, who, uniting with the scum of the Arab population, started further fires, pillaged the commercial quarter, and massacred any Christians they could find.

On July 12th anarchy, incendiarism, and chaos still prevailed, and on the same day the Khedive, surrounded in his palace at Ramleh by some hundreds of Arabi's troops, was in danger of his life. The *Condor* was sent to anchor off the palace, and lay there all night, rolling in the swell, with

Tw

a spring on her cable and her guns trained down the road by which the troops must advance if an attack came. The night went by without alarm, and the next day, escorted by loyal cavalry, the Khedive went to the Ras-el-Tin palace, where he was received by the admiral and a guard of Royal Marines.

On the same day, Captain John Fisher of the *Inflexible* (afterwards Admiral of the Fleet Lord Fisher of Kilverstone) took over the outer defences of the city, with a force of about 800 seamen and marines with machine guns. To the rear of his position the city was still in the hands of the mob, and in applying to Sir Beauchamp Seymour for an officer to act as provost-marshal and chief of police, he mentioned the name of Lord Charles Beresford.

On July 4th Lord Charles accordingly landed with 130 bluejackets and marines to act as police, the foreign warships supplying a few more men to protect their own legations. Escorted by a small troop of loyal Egyptian cavalry, he rode round the town to see how he could best carry out his orders ' to restore law and order as soon as possible, put out the fires, and bury the dead.' The task was no easy one, for, as he wrote in a letter at the time—' streets, squares, and blocks of buildings were all on fire, roaring and crackling and tumbling about like a hell let loose, Arabs murdering each other for loot under my nose, wretches running about with fire-balls and torches to light up new places, all the main thoroughfares impassable from burning fallen houses, streets with many corpses in them, mostly murdered by the Arab soldiers . . . in fact, a pandemonium of hell and its devils.' [1]

For the first seventy-two hours neither he nor his handful of men slept a wink. Busy patrolling the city day and night, they were twice called away to reinforce the front line in readiness for attacks which never materialised. During their absence the fires broke out afresh.

More seamen and marines were gradually sent ashore to assist in restoring order, and, organising a fire-brigade, sanitary and burial parties, and other gangs to clear away the débris, Lord Charles, by degrees, cleaned up the city. The moment he landed he realised he could never accomplish the work unless he were granted plenary powers, and, after some demur on the part of the Khedive, he was finally permitted to post proclamations announcing that incendiaries and looters would be shot. This had the desired effect, for within five days of landing, after a few executions and floggings, incendiarism

[1] *The Memoirs of Lord Charles Beresford*, Vol. I., p. 191.

had stopped, looting had nearly ceased, and life was comparatively safe in the streets. By July 21st law and order once more prevailed, shops were opening, and the inhabitants went about their normal business.

Relieved in his duties as provost-marshal on August 1st, Beresford was thanked by the admiral. At about the same time he received news of his promotion to the rank of captain, for his services during the bombardment. The *Condor* was not a captain's command, and, relieved by a commander, he left her with the greatest regret and went on half pay, with a message of congratulation from Queen Victoria.

Thanked by the Khedive for his work, His Highness also offered him a position on his staff, in which capacity he would be able to go to the front. The Foreign Secretary and the Admiralty having given their permission, Beresford accordingly went down the Suez Canal to Ismailia, where the British Army was concentrating for the advance into lower Egypt. General Sir Garnet Wolseley, however, the military commander-in-chief, would not grant him permission to accept the Khedive's proffered appointment. Even the Prince of Wales's private request to the general to allow Beresford to join the army met with no response.

Filled with disappointment, Lord Charles was packing up his belongings when the war-correspondent of a London paper told him he was empowered to appoint a correspondent to the *New York Herald*, and that he had obtained permission to send him to the front. Offered the appointment, Lord Charles eagerly accepted it; but again the military authorities stepped in and refused the necessary permission. There was nothing for it but to return to England, so home he went.

With the total defeat of Arabi's army at Tel-el-Kebir on September 13th, the entry of Sir Garnet Wolseley's troops into Cairo on the 14th and 15th, and the triumphal return of the Khedive to the capital ten days later, the brief Egyptian campaign came to an end.

Tried for treason, Arabi was condemned to death, the sentence, however, being commuted to banishment for life. Towards the end of the year he sailed for Ceylon. The thanks of Parliament were voted to the Army and Navy for their services; Queen Victoria awarded a medal, and the Khedive a bronze star, to all the officers and men engaged; while Admiral Sir Beauchamp Seymour and General Sir Garnet Wolseley were raised to the peerage.

4

The full story of the Soudan campaign of 1884-5, during which Lord Charles Beresford served on the staff of the military commander-in-chief, General Sir Garnet Wolseley, is hardly germane to the present narrative. The events leading up to the war, however, are interesting, for they show an almost unbelievable procrastination and ineptitude on the part of the British government then in power.

In 1881 trouble had started in the Soudan, the southern portion of the Khedive's dominions, by an insurrection headed by Mahomed Ahmed of Dongola, who announced that he was the Mahdi, the chosen instrument of Allah for the reformation of Islam, whose advent had been foretold by the Moslem prophets. Gathering the fierce tribesmen to his banner, he had, during 1882, signally defeated various detachments of British troops maintaining order in the province of Kordofan. In December of the same year, the British government informed the Khedive that it declined to make itself responsible for the internal condition of the Soudan, a country almost as large as India, with no railways, no roads, no canals, and, with the exception of the Nile at certain seasons of the year, no navigable rivers.

A number of British officers had, however, been appointed to the reorganised Egyptian army, and in January 1883, Colonel W. Hicks, better known as Hicks Pasha, was appointed by the Khedive as chief-of-staff to the army in the Soudan. Leaving Cairo in February he arrived at Berber on March 1st, and on April 28th defeated a large force of the Mahdi's army on the White Nile. The Egyptian government thereupon decided to reconquer the Kordofan province, and sent reinforcements to Khartoum. Continuing his march up the Nile with an army of about 11,000, Hicks arrived at Duem on September 20th. Thence he advanced into the desert. Early in November, decoyed into a defile near El Obeid, his army was annihilated by overwhelming multitudes of dervishes.

The disaster left Khartoum in great danger ; but, before the news of it reached England, the British government had already announced its intention of withdrawing all British troops from Egypt. This decision was rescinded in the light of Hicks's defeat, but Mr. Gladstone's government still declined to intervene in the Soudan, and advised the Khedive to abandon a portion of the disputed territory. The Egyptian government

protested, whereupon, on January 4th, 1884, Britain sent a peremptory message insisting upon evacuation.

Meanwhile, in August 1883, further trouble had arisen in the Eastern Soudan, where Osman Digna, an ex-slave-trader, had collected the tribesmen to his standard and had thrown in his lot with the Mahdi. Between November 1883 and the following February, this new leader inflicted severe reverses on Egyptian detachments round about Suakin, on the Red Sea. Throughout the period in which these disasters occurred, the British army of occupation in Cairo remained inactive under orders from home.

Still disclaiming any intention of resisting the Mahdi's power, Mr. Gladstone now announced that the rescue of the various Egyptian garrisons in the Soudan was all that was necessary to fulfil Britain's obligations. To achieve this object, the government took the amazing and indefensible step of sending out General Charles Gordon—'Chinese' Gordon—to negotiate single-handed with the Mahdi.

Ten years previously, as governor-general of the Soudan, Gordon had successfully freed the country from Turkish domination, broken the slave trade, established comparative peace, and laid foundations of civilisation. He had performed similar good work in Abyssinia, China, and elsewhere. Arriving in Cairo in January 1884, he was required to direct the evacuation of Khartoum and the whole of the Soudan, and to establish an organised government. Almost alone, he reached Khartoum, then garrisoned by a slender force of Egyptians, on February 18th.

A brigade of the British army from Cairo, meanwhile, had landed at Suakin, and on February 28th and March 13th inflicted defeats on Osman Digna's army at the battles of El Teb and Tamaai. Having done this, however, the British troops were ordered to return to Cairo. In other words, the government deliberately abandoned the Suakin-Berber-Khartoum line, which was not only the shortest route into the interior, but the only route by which Gordon could possibly have evacuated refugees.

It was a tale of miserable incapacity and mismanagement on the part of the British government, a failure to realise the real situation of affairs in the Soudan, and a complete and utter misunderstanding of the Mahdi's strength.

Soon after Gordon's arrival at Khartoum he had telegraphed that there was little chance of the situation improving and 'every chance of it getting worse.' He had strongly advised

the opening up of the Suakin-Berber road by means of Moslem troops from India, for Berber, about 120 miles up the Nile from Khartoum, was virtually the key of the Soudan. A month later, telegraphing again to the same effect, his representations were backed up by the British Resident in Egypt. The advice, however, was refused by the British Foreign Secretary, Lord Granville, who obstinately remained deaf to all recommendations from men on the spot, the men who really knew.

Placed in an utterly impossible situation, with no troops to second his arguments, and deserted by the government, Gordon did his best. His overtures to the Mahdi met with no success, and early in April 1884, Khartoum was closely besieged and Gordon was cut off in the midst of an enemy country.

Queen Victoria herself, the Prince of Wales, and many other influential persons, including Lord Wolseley, now joined in the popular outcry for the despatch of a military relief expedition. In May, thanks to journalistic pressure and public clamour in England, portion of the British army of occupation in Egypt was sent up the Nile, and half-hearted preparations for an expedition were made in England. Mr. Gladstone's government, however, still pusillanimously shrank from more decisive measures, and so late as early in July Lord Hartington informed the House of Commons that the government had no intention of sending a relief expedition, as it had 'received no information making it desirable that we should depart from that decision.'

But there was no withstanding public opinion. Far away in the Soudan, Great Britain was being flouted by the Mahdi and his followers, and Gordon was shut up in Khartoum. It was more than England could stand, and on August 5th Mr. Gladstone asked for and obtained a vote of credit. Preparations for war were hurried forward, and Lord Wolseley was appointed commander-in-chief of an expeditionary force ordered to advance up the Nile, a long and difficult route which need never have been used if Gordon's advice as to the Suakin-Berber route had previously been taken. Even now the British government failed to see the true facts of the situation. The main object of the expedition, Lord Wolseley was instructed, was to rescue General Gordon, and the government considered that his release might be effected without going as far as Khartoum. Lord Wolseley's instructions also stated that it was desirable to avoid fighting so far as it was possible.

With these orders Lord Wolseley left England on September 1st, 1884. With him went Captain Lord Charles Beresford,

who had been appointed to his staff at the personal request of the Prince of Wales.

Thus it was, after months of feebleness and shilly-shallying, that the British government found itself involved in a long, costly, and difficult campaign in a desert country of vast dimensions. Had an ordinary degree of firmness been shown at the outset, the war, or series of wars, in the Soudan need never have been fought. As it was, they lasted on and off for fourteen years, and cost Great Britain millions of money and thousands of lives, until, on September 2nd, 1898, Lord Kitchener, by his victory at Omdurman, finally restored the Soudan to Egyptian rule, avenged Gordon's death, and removed the blot which the infirmity of purpose displayed by Mr. Gladstone's government had left upon the British name and character in Egypt.

5

In September 1884, Lord Charles Beresford was ordered up the Nile to arrange for the water transport of the expeditionary force as far as Wadi Halfa, which was to serve as a temporary base prior to the general advance into the Soudan. Eight hundred 'whalers,' double-ended boats thirty feet long, fitted for twelve oars and two masts with lug-sails, and each capable of carrying ten soldiers and 1,000 rations and ammunition, were gradually arriving from England. They were each manned by Canadian 'voyageurs,' men accustomed to river work. There were also to be provided eight steam-pinnaces for towing, two stern-wheel paddlers, and a number of river steamers, lent by the Egyptian government. This miscellaneous flotilla had first to be got through the First Cataract, just south of Assouan, whence they proceeded up the Nile to Wadi Halfa.

Early in October a small force of mounted infantry, transported up the river in native boats, had established themselves at Dongola, where they were presently joined by a Camel Corps of 18,000 officers and men. The remaining troops and stores from Wadi Halfa had to be sent to Dongola by water.

Just south of Wadi Halfa, however, was the Second Cataract, where the pent-up waters of the Nile surged in a raging torrent through the narrow gorge of Bab-el-Kebir. Studded with rocks, the passage was supposed to be impossible for even the small steamers, but Lord Charles was determined to try.

ENGLAND AND WALES
ON SAME SCALE
ALEXANDRIA
PORT SAID
CAIRO
SUEZ
0
100
STATUTE
200
MILES
300
400
500
River Nile
RED SEA
ASSOUAN
1ST Cat.
WADI HALFA
2ND Cat.
SOUDAN
3RD Cat.
DONGOLA
KORTI
4TH Cat.
5TH Cat.
BERBER
SUAKIN
ABUKLEA
METEMMEH
6TH Cat
OMDURMAN
KHARTOUM
Atbara R.
KORDOFAN
White Nile
Blue Nile
EL OBEID

Putting about 4,000 natives on to the towing hawser of the first vessel, she was gradually hauled into the broken, leaping water, tumbling down its rocky bed with the strength of a mill-race. There was little clearance between her fragile sides and the sharp boulders, and, time and time again, she was flung bodily against them. Had she not been protected with timber and matting she must have been smashed to match-wood. Inch by inch she advanced against the angry current, until, in the middle of the gorge, she came to a standstill. Calling upon Allah for strength, the natives could not budge her another foot, whereupon she had to be eased back again into the calmer waters down-stream. Fifteen hundred British soldiers now manned the tow-rope, and, with much bad language, succeeded in dragging the little vessel triumphantly into the calm river beyond.

The task of hauling through the whalers and native 'nuggars' was not so difficult. By the end of November, 687 boats had gone through the Second Cataract, and by December 6th the last one had passed. To accomplish his difficult task, Lord Charles had a small party of naval officers and bluejackets, over 1,000 soldiers working in different sections of the river, and what natives were available on the spot. But the work had been well done, and the whole expedition was at last moving up-river.

He had already been ordered to form a naval brigade of ten officers and 100 men, and by December 21st had been informed that it was Lord Wolseley's intention to send the Naval Brigade with the Camel Corps across the desert from Korti to Metemmeh. While the Camel Corps attacked Khartoum by land, the seamen, embarking in Gordon's steamers, which were to be sent to a point some thirty-five miles north of Khartoum by the Sixth Cataract, were to operate on the river.

By the end of the year the whole of the expeditionary force was concentrating at Korti, and on January 8th, 1885, the Desert Column of about 1,600 officers and men, of whom five officers and fifty-three men, under the command of Lord Charles, belonged to the Royal Navy, left that place for their march of 176 miles across the Bayuda Desert to Metemmeh. A River Column was also to proceed south along the Nile, clearing up the country as it went. After occupying Berber, the key-position, it was to join the Desert Column at Metemmeh.

The last message from Gordon, dated December 14th, had safely come through by native runner. Reaching Lord Wolseley on the 31st, it said briefly, 'Khartoum all right.'

Everyone in the expeditionary force had the brightest hopes of success. Given a fair amount of good fortune, Gordon's relief seemed certain.

With the camels dropping and dying on the way, and the thirsty men drinking the bitter, muddy water from the occasional wells and pools, the Desert Column pushed on for their goal through the blazing sun and sand of the desert. On January 16th, as usual, the column broke camp in the darkness, and, when daylight came, the hills of Abu Klea were in sight in the distance. A small force of cavalry was pushed on ahead to occupy the all-important wells ; but at 11 a.m., when the main column had halted for breakfast just short of the hills, scouts returned with the report that large numbers of the enemy were concentrated between the British and the water-holes. Advancing slowly towards the pass in the range of hills, innumerable white-robed figures could presently be seen through glasses, leaping and gesticulating on the dark cliffs commanding the defile. Occasionally there came puffs of smoke as they fired their rifles, but, as yet, the range was too great for effective shooting.

That night, January 16th–17th, the column lay in a 'zareba'[1] in the valley, with the Naval Brigade and some mounted infantry occupying a hill on the left flank. All through the night the dervishes fired at long range into the camp, and the air was filled with the monotonous, throbbing beat of many tom-toms. Morning came, to show thousands of white-clad figures clustered nearer upon the hills, with a line of green and white flags fluttering over the scrub.

When it became evident that the enemy would not attack, General Sir Herbert Stewart decided to form a square and to advance, and at about 10 o'clock the force began to move over the foothills towards its objective. The route, commanded by the higher slopes and hilltops occupied by the enemy, who poured in a heavy and constant fire, lay over ground studded with boulders and rocky knolls, fissured with dried-up water-courses. It was almost impassable for camels, which lagged behind, slipping and falling, until the rear force of the square was tangled up with a grunting, squealing mass of animals and their native drivers, terrified by the heavy rifle fire and dropping bullets.

Finally, after an hour's hard work, two miles had been covered. Then, on mounting a slight rise, a line of white and

[1] 'Zareba,' a hedged or palisaded enclosure for the protection of a camp or village.

green flags was suddenly sighted at a distance of about 600 yards, in the coarse grass and scrub. More flags suddenly fluttered above the others, and the next instant the valley was alive with a horde of black and white figures, and the air resounding with their battle-cries. Moving rapidly across the left front, they disappeared behind the rocks and undergrowth, while the square was hastily moved forward to obtain a better position on the top of a small knoll. Before the movement was complete the enemy reappeared—three separate bodies, headed by horsemen with fluttering banners advancing at a hand-gallop, followed by thousands of white-clothed footmen keeping pace with them. The British skirmishers came racing back to save their lives. The battle of Abu Klea had begun.

The square was hurriedly reformed with the camels inside, and a heavy fire opened on the enemy at a range of about 400 yards, the naval Gardner gun, stationed five or six paces outside the square on the left flank, joining in. The dervishes went down in swathes ; but, coming on in their thousands, they tore down, as Lord Charles writes, ' with a roar like the roar of the sea, an immense surging wave of white-slashed black forms, brandishing bright spears and long flashing swords,' and all of them shouting, as they leapt and ran, the war-cry of their faith, ' La illaha ill Allah Mohammedu rasal Allah.'

Nothing could stop them. In a moment or two their leading ranks, pushed on by the great multitude behind, had reached the square, where they flung themselves with fanatical courage against the thin fringe of British bayonets. Lord Charles was firing the Gardner gun himself, when the weapon suddenly jammed. With a seaman he tried to clear it, but the next instant the enemy surged upon them. Two sailors, manning the Gardner, were instantly thrust through with spears and killed, while Beresford himself owed his life to being knocked under the gun. He was chopped at with an axe, the blade of which missed him. Then an Arab thrust at him with a spear, but catching the broad blade he succeeded in diverting it with no further damage then a badly-cut hand. Struggling to his feet, he was carried bodily backwards in the rush, unable to draw either sword or pistol.

For some time, in the wild mêlée and pressure, the front ranks of the square could use neither rifle nor bayonet. Finally, the rear ranks fired into the crowd of Arabs over the heads of those in front. The enemy fell in heaps. The pressure became relaxed, and the front rank fell to work—cursing as their rifles

jammed through the use of the old-fashioned leaf cartridges,[1] and their long bayonets of shoddy steel twisted like children's playthings.

It is impossible to describe the fierce hand-to-hand fighting that took place before the enemy were finally repulsed, for every man present had his own adventures, his own set of unforgettable experiences. Of the British force of about 1,500 men, however, nine officers and sixty-five men were killed, and eighty-five were wounded, the Naval Brigade losing two officers and eight men killed and seven wounded. The attacking force, numbering between 5,000 and 6,000, left about 800 dead upon the field.

Abu Klea, as someone who was present described it, was an Inkerman on a small scale—a soldier's battle, in which strength, determination, steadiness, and unflinching courage alone could have stemmed the onslaught. In the tumult and confusion of the bloody hand-to-hand fighting, orders could neither be given nor heard. It was a case of each man for himself and those immediately around him—a soldier's battle ; a little battle, according to modern ideas, which, in the light of bigger things, has long since passed into comparative insignificance. Nevertheless, while it lasted, it was a trying ordeal enough, doubly trying to men who, hungry and parched with thirst, had marched many weary miles across the burning desert with none of the conveniences of transport available to modern campaigners.

That same evening the weary little force toiled on to the wells of Abu Klea, small pools in the soil which, on being emptied, slowly refilled with muddy, sweetish water, of almost the consistency of cream. The Nile still lay about twenty-five miles ahead, and at about 3.30 p.m. on the 18th the column left its camp and moved on for the river. The troops had had no proper sleep for two nights, had fought a battle, and had suffered agonies of thirst and hunger. But there was no alternative. General Sir Herbert Stewart had heard that the enemy fought at Abu Klea was no more than the advance guard of a greater host. Thousands more dervishes would

[1] A rifle cartridge is usually of solid-drawn brass. In 1885, however, the .45 Martini-Henry rifle, with which British troops were armed, fired a leaf cartridge formed of a twisted ribbon of brass, probably for the sake of economy. It was liable to expand on firing, and to jam in the breech. 'Nearly half the British rifles jammed,' says Lord Charles. 'During the action of Abu Klea, the officers were almost entirely employed in clearing jammed rifles passed back to them by the men. The British bayonets and cutlasses bent and twisted, the result of a combination of knavery and laziness on the part of those who were trusted to supply the soldier with weapons upon which his life depends.'

stream out of Metemmeh to stem the British advance, while the fall of Omdurman had released a great portion of the Mahdi's army. The general wished to reach the river before fighting again. It was a forlorn hope, and everyone knew it.

Marching by night with an Arab guide, the column lost its way, and when daylight came on the morning of the 19th the Nile was not in sight. At 7 o'clock, however, mounting a gentle rise, the river could be seen four miles ahead. Flowing between its broad banks of green vegetation, lined with native villages, with the walled town of Metemmeh in the distance, it looked deliciously cool and inviting. But it was not to be gained without further fighting, for moving out from Metemmeh across the line of advance were hordes of the enemy. Once more the air throbbed to the ominous drumming of the tom-toms.

The men had been marching for fourteen hours and had covered nineteen weary miles. They were exhausted with hunger, and Sir Herbert Stewart determined to give them breakfast before advancing farther. A zareba of saddles and biscuit-boxes was hastily thrown up, and the camels knee-haltered and pushed inside it. The enemy, meanwhile, with ample cover in the thin scrub, crept nearer and opened fire. The men ate their breakfast in a rain of bullets, while some, falling asleep, were shot as they lay. In the blazing sun, exposed to a merciless fire from a concealed enemy, man after man went down. The camels lay motionless and silent, with blood trickling from their wounds, and between 9 and 10 o'clock, Sir Herbert Stewart himself was hit in the groin and desperately wounded. The command passed automatically to Colonel Sir Charles Wilson, chief of the Intelligence Department.

The day wore on, but at 2.30 p.m., leaving Lord Charles Beresford in charge of the zareba with a small force, Sir Charles formed his remaining troops into a square and moved on towards the river under heavy fire. Good discipline and musketry prevailed. The front ranks of the charging enemy were mown down in heaps. The rear ranks fled, and soon after dusk the weary little force of 900 men reached the blessed water. 'The men were as wild with joy as their exhausted condition would allow,' wrote Count Gleichen. 'Still perfect discipline was observed. Not a man left his place in the ranks until his company was marched up to take its fill. . . . A chain of sentinels was established on the slopes overlooking the square, and in two minutes the force was fast asleep.'[1]

[1] *With the Camel Corps up the Nile*, by Count Gleichen.

By sunset on January 20th, twelve days after leaving Korti, the entire force was encamped on the banks of the Nile, about two miles south of Metemmeh.

6

Gordon's four steamers from Khartoum joined the Desert Column on January 21st, bringing the news that the city was still holding out. That same day, however, a reconnaisance in force convinced Sir Charles Wilson that the capture of the strong position of Metemmeh was impossible with the small force at his disposal.

Lord Charles Beresford was so ill that he could scarcely hobble, and was presently compelled to go into hospital. All the other officers of the Naval Brigade except one had been killed or wounded, while the Desert Column, with more than 100 wounded on its hands, was in danger of attack by a greatly superior enemy. For these reasons, Wilson no longer considered it possible for the four steamers, manned by the navy, to take him and a detachment of infantry up the river to Khartoum in accordance with Lord Wolseley's original instructions.

We know that the British government considered that Wolseley might get through to Khartoum without really serious fighting, but in sending a column of barely 1,600 officers and men into the heart of the enemy country, Wolseley himself seems also to have underestimated the strength of the Mahdi's army and its fighting capacity. Well-armed and used to desert warfare, capable of living upon the barren country and recklessly brave, the dervishes were no mean foemen, particularly when inspired by religious motives.

On January 22nd, Sir Charles Wilson took three of the steamers downstream for a reconnaissance in the direction of Berber. They were fired at from the river banks ; but from a friendly native he learnt that the dervish army, marching south from Berber, had met the fugitives from Abu Klea and had turned back. For the time, therefore, no attack threatened from the north, and Sir Charles, changing his mind, decided to carry out the river expedition to Khartoum.

At 8 o'clock on January 24th two of the steamers accordingly started up the river. Besides Sir Charles Wilson, they carried two officers and twenty men of the Royal Sussex Regiment, a handful of naval ratings, and about 190 Soudanese soldiers. Another fifty Soudanese were towed in a 'nuggar,' with a cargo of grain for Khartoum.

Apart from the rescue of Gordon, the chief object of the expedition was to produce a moral effect upon the Mahdists, and by Gordon's special desire the men of the Royal Sussex wore red tunics, borrowed for the occasion from the Guards and the Heavy Camel Corps.

Lord Charles Beresford, still in hospital, volunteered to accompany Wilson. But, as the latter wrote in his journal, 'there was every prospect of his getting worse before he was better. Besides, I felt I could not deprive the force of its only naval officer, when it was quite possible the steamers left behind might have to take part in a fight.'

So Beresford, luckily for everyone concerned, was left behind in camp.

He was only in hospital for two days, and on January 26th and 27th took one of the steamers, the little *Safieh*, down the river to cover foraging expeditions sent out to procure cattle, goats, and vegetables, together with fodder for the camels. On the 28th there was a great noise of drumming and firing in Metemmeh, which the British imagined to be the celebration of some religious festival, while on the 31st a large convoy came in from across the desert. With the convoy came another small force of seamen with four naval officers—Lieutenant van Koughnet, Sub-Lieutenant Colin Keppel, Surgeon Arthur William May, and Chief-Engineer Henry Benbow. Never was a reinforcement more opportune. With the aid of these new officers and men, Beresford was able to put the little *Safieh* into fighting trim.

'A penny steamer in a packing case,' as he describes her, the *Safieh* was about the size of one of the small vessels plying on the upper reaches of the Thames. Her sides were protected with timber, and barricades of railway sleepers and boiler-plate were built round the wheel and as cover for riflemen. Two Gardner machine guns were mounted amidships, and at either end was a 4-pounder brass mountain gun behind improvised protection. Protected more or less against rifle bullets, a shell would pierce her like so much brown paper. And the dervish army was tolerably well supplied with light artillery.

Beresford was in the habit of sleeping on board the *Safieh* moored in the stream, and early in the morning of February 1st he was awakened by the sound of a hail. Going to the rail he looked down to see a boat alongside. In the boat was Lieutenant Stuart-Wortley, of the King's Royal Rifles, who had accompanied Sir Charles Wilson. He climbed on board.

"Gordon is killed and Khartoum has fallen," he said, and

then went on to explain how Sir Charles Wilson's two steamers had been wrecked, that he and his force were isolated up the river, while at any moment the Mahdi and his army might march down and overwhelm them with all the guns and rifles from the captured city. Stuart-Wortley, with four British soldiers and eight natives, at the peril of their lives, had travelled forty miles down the river in a native boat by night to bring the dismal news.

What had happened may be briefly described.

After sundry vicissitudes, Wilson's two steamers, on the morning of January 28th, had come within distant sight of the roofs and minarets of Khartoum. They had already been informed by natives from the banks that Khartoum had fallen, and that Gordon had been killed on the 26th ; but, disbelieving the tale as a rumour, pushed resolutely on through a heavy fire from the enemy batteries and riflemen. Steaming on, they finally came into clear sight of Government House at Khartoum. No Union Flag was flying from its roof. Rounding the curve of an island, the city presently rose into full view, and there, beyond an area of water, splashed with shell and rifle bullets, the Mahdi's green and white banners could be seen fluttering above the hordes of dervishes massed on the sandy foreshore.

Then, and not until then, Sir Charles realised that the stories were true. Gordon was dead. Khartoum had fallen. Nothing further could be done. He gave the order to go about.

Running the gauntlet of the batteries, the steamers proceeded down the river for thirty miles and moored for the night. The next day, January 29th, while negotiating a cataract, one of them struck a rock and had to be abandoned. Her British crew were transferred to the other, which, with the ' nuggar,' proceeded on her way. But on the 31st the second steamer also came to grief, and had to be run ashore to prevent her sinking. Sir Charles Wilson landed his guns, ammunition, and stores with the intention of marching back to the camp near Metemmeh, a distance overland of thirty-five miles. But, changing his mind, he decided to remain encamped for the night, and sent off Stuart-Wortley in a small boat with the news of the disaster.

Beresford at once made up his mind. Whatever happened, Wilson and his small party must be saved from almost certain death. The distance by river to the island where he was encamped was a full forty miles. The *Safieh* could crawl no

more than 2.5 miles an hour against the strong current, and on her way she must pass within eighty yards of the strong earthwork fort of Wad Habeshi, manned by 5,000 riflemen and mounting four guns.

The enterprise seemed desperate enough.

7

It was at 2 o'clock on the afternoon of February 1st that the little *Safieh*, flying the White Ensign, left the camp and steamed off up the river to rescue Sir Charles Wilson and his little force. Lord Charles had with him six naval officers, among whom were Chief-Engineer Henry Benbow and a surgeon, fourteen picked men from among his bluejackets, two engine-room artificers and a chief stoker, all of the Royal Navy. The military detachment comprised three officers and twenty British soldiers from the Mounted Infantry, the ship's company being completed by an Arab engineer, six Soudanese firemen, and a native pilot. The latter was handcuffed to a stanchion on the bridge, with a bluejacket with a loaded revolver standing beside him, the sailor having orders to shoot him on any sign of treachery or a deliberate attempt to run the vessel ashore.

It being impossible to navigate during darkness the *Safieh* anchored for the night, and spent most of the next day replenishing her wood fuel by dismantling and cutting up the native water-wheels on the banks of the river. By evening, however, she arrived within three or four miles of the dervish riverside fort at Wad Habeshi, and again came to an anchor.

Weighing early next morning, the fort was sighted at 7 a.m., while beyond, far up the river, could be seen the hull and funnel of Wilson's stranded steamer. Half-an-hour later, at a range of about 1,200 yards, Beresford opened fire on the fort with his bow 7-pounder. The *Safieh*, moving like a snail against the strong current, was soon being heavily peppered by crowds of riflemen on the bank. Disregarding them, however, Beresford, steaming on, concentrated the fire of his two 7-pounders, the starboard Gardner gun, and his thirty-four riflemen on the fort itself. His only possible chance of running the gauntlet at the short range of eighty yards was to keep down the hostile gunfire. One direct hit with even a small shell might bring the thinly protected steamer to a standstill.

She crawled past the battery with only two casualties, and reached a position about 200 yards beyond it, where her guns

would no longer bear. Then, just as they were congratulating themselves on their safety, a great burst of steam and smoke shot up the after hatchway and the black firemen came rushing on deck in a state of panic.

It was uncertain for the moment whether the ship was on fire or her boiler had been penetrated, but as she was still moving slowly ahead, Beresford headed her towards the far bank and anchored. The carpenter's mate, meanwhile, reported three feet of water in the well and that the ship was sinking.

While the riflemen still kept up their fire on the fort to prevent the dervishes from getting in another shot, Lord Charles, addressing his ship's company, told them that no relief was possible, and that they must fight it out to the last.

Benbow, meanwhile, who had been below to inspect the damage, came up to report that the boiler had been holed above the waterline, which accounted for the water in the ship's bottom. The *Safieh* would not founder. Asked if the damage could be repaired, he replied that he thought it could. He promptly set to work.

The time was now between 9 and 10 a.m.

Fires were drawn and the water pumped out of the boiler, where Benbow found a jagged hole some three inches in diameter. As luck would have it, he had brought with him from Wady Halfa some sheet iron and some bolts and nuts. The two engine-room artificers had been severely scalded, and now, with the help of a stoker, he set to work to cut a suitable-sized plate, to drill holes in it to receive the bolts, and to drill the corresponding holes in the shell of the boiler itself. The new plate, being of thin sheet-iron, had also to be strengthened with an iron bar.

Hour after hour, while the engagement on deck continued and bullets pattered on the *Safieh's* hull like hail, the devoted Benbow laboured at his task in the stifling heat of the engine-room. The patch had to fit to a nicety, the holes must correspond exactly. And upon that patch depended, not merely the safety of the *Safieh* and all on board her, not only the safety of Sir Charles Wilson and his men, but also, though they did not know it at the time, the safety of the entire Desert Column in their camp near Metemmeh.

The positions of the *Safieh's* guns were altered so that the fire from the fort could be kept under, the crazy old vessel trembling to the discharges. Sir Charles Wilson, meanwhile, further up-stream, seeing the *Safieh* heavily engaged, broke up his camp, embarked his wounded, guns, ammunition, and stores

in a 'nuggar,' and sent them downstream, while he himself, with the remainder of his force, embarked in another boat and marched down the bank of the Nile to a point opposite the steamer. From this position he maintained a fire upon the fort until sundown, after which he marched farther down the river and formed a zareba at a spot suitable for embarkation.

All through the morning Benbow had stuck to his task, and at 2 p.m. he was joined by two naval engine-room artificers who had been with Wilson's party. By 5 o'clock the patch and bar were made and all the holes drilled. Before it could be screwed in place, however, it was necessary for a man to be inside the boiler, and the boiler was still too hot. Cold water was pumped in and out to cool it, but the temperature was still too high for any European. At 6 o'clock, smearing a small native boy with tallow, they lowered him in through the manhole. He came out quicker than he entered. Promised a reward, however, he went in again after a short rest, and this time remained sufficiently long to pass the bolts through their holes. By 7 p.m. the job was finished.[1]

As darkness came on the fire from the fort slackened. Beresford's object was now to gull the enemy into the belief that the ship had been abandoned, for if they thought her empty, they would be unlikely to damage a valuable prize by gunfire. On the other hand, if they had any suspicion that the ship's company were still on board, they might bring one of the guns from the fort abreast of the steamer and fire upon her at close range, and a single hit might disable her for good.

The better to deceive them, he ostentatiously brought Wilson's four boats alongside before dark as though to disembark the crew. The ruse succeeded, for, when the night came, all firing ceased as though by magic.

Throughout the hours of darkness not a light was visible from the *Safieh*, while the men talked in whispers and smoked their pipes under cover. And at 5 o'clock the next morning the faithful Benbow lit the fires in the furnaces, taking the greatest care to prevent tell-tale sparks from flying from the perforated funnel. At 5.50, however, some ten minutes before daylight, a shower of red-hot ashes shot skywards like a fountain. The

[1] In 1898, the *Safieh*, then in the hands of the dervishes, was captured by the gunboats under the command of Lord Kitchener, on the White Nile, about 300 miles south of Khartoum. The patch put on by Benbow was still in position. Lord Kitchener had the plate cut and sent to Lord Charles Beresford, by whom it was presented to the museum of the Royal Naval College at Greenwich.

native chief stoker, seeing 10lbs. of steam on the pressure-gauge, had ordered his men to throw open the draught-plates before Benbow could interfere. Shouting broke out in the fort ashore. The tom-toms beat the alarm, and before long, guns and rifles again opened fire.

Within ten minutes, 20lbs. of steam pressure was showing on the gauge, and, weighing her anchor, the *Safieh* moved off up river in the direction of Khartoum. She travelled thus for about a quarter of a mile, and then, putting her helm over, came back on her track and dashed past the fort with the current in her favour and every gun and rifle firing. She ran the gauntlet in safety, and some distance below, Sir Charles Wilson was waiting on the bank with his detachment. They were duly embarked, and shortly before 6 p.m. the same day, February 4th, the *Safieh* was back at the camp of the Desert Column near Metemmeh.

From first to last it had been a gallant piece of work, and, as later evidence proved, the action of Lord Charles Beresford at Wad Habeshi not only saved the lives of Sir Charles Wilson and his men, but also had the effect of making the local dervish leaders dread meeting the British on the river, and so saved the Desert Column from an attack by overwhelming numbers of the enemy, which might have meant its virtual annihilation.

Lord Charles, who was described by Lord Wolseley in his despatches as 'an officer whose readiness and resource and ability as a leader are only equalled by his daring,' spoke most highly of all his officers and men, but mentioned, in particular, Chief-Engineer Henry Benbow, who, with great ingenuity and resource, had saved the situation 'with a piece of boiler plate and a handful of bolts.' His services were recognised by his promotion by the Admiralty to the rank of chief inspector of machinery, or, as it would now be called, engineer-captain. He also received the special thanks of Lord Wolseley, who gave him his own silver cigarette case. At the time, however, he received no decoration, and it was not until the institution of the Distinguished Service Order on September 6th, 1886, that he became one of its first recipients. Years afterwards he became Sir Henry Benbow, K.C.B.

So far as can be discovered, the negro boy who clambered into the boiler received no medal or decoration, and might not have been grateful if he had. To him a handful of copper coins was probably worth all the medals in Christendom. Yet a good deal also had depended upon him.

8

Khartoum had fallen. Gordon was dead, and on February 14th, having destroyed the stores for which there was no transport, the Desert Column left its camp near Metemmeh and started its long trek back to Korti. There was hardly a whole pair of boots in the whole column, and the sailors marched barefoot, each man carrying his rifle, cutlass, and seventy rounds of ammunition, and many of them towing refractory camels. After spasmodic fighting on the way, Korti was reached on March 8th.

Everyone expected a renewal of the campaign in the autumn and a determined attempt to recapture Khartoum. Hopes in this direction were speedily disappointed, for on April 13th, Lord Wolseley was ordered by the British government to consider the means necessary to carry out the complete evacuation of the Soudan. After a brief visit to the scene of the fighting against Osman Digna in the neighbourhood of Suakin, the commander-in-chief, on May 11th, issued instructions for the withdrawal of all British troops. At the end of June, after turning over the command of the forces in Egypt, he sailed for England, accompanied by Lord Charles Beresford and the remainder of his staff.

Beresford, who had thrice been mentioned in despatches during the campaign, was gazetted a C.B. on August 25th, 1885. The Prince of Wales sent him a miniature C.B., which he described in the accompanying letter ' as a token of old friendship and sincere regard.' ' I trust,' he added, ' that an opportunity may ere long arise for you to get the K.C.B.' [1]

At the general election in the autumn of 1885, Lord Charles stood for East Marylebone and was duly elected to Parliament. Since the year previous, when a series of naval articles had appeared in the *Pall Mall Gazette*, public opinion was gradually becoming awakened to the fact that all was not well with the Navy, many of its ships being ill-armed and obsolete, and there being no real organisation for war. The Navy, indeed, was unprepared, and, with his characteristic energy, Beresford took up the cause in the House of Commons.

He was still a junior post-captain, aged thirty-nine, and his zeal in the direction of naval reform did not enhance his popularity with the naval authorities. ' I had,' he wrote, ' to choose between the stormy enterprise of the reformer, and the safer course of official acquiescence and party obedience,

[1] *King Edward VII*, Vol. I., p. 468.

leading to promotion and office. In making the choice, I had to consider that, as a naval officer advocating this and that in spite of the authorities, I laid myself open to the charge that such matters were none of my business, which was to obey orders.'

He deliberately took the pathway of the reformer, and during 1886, besides combating Mr. Gladstone's Home Rule Bill, was urging upon the government a considerable increase in the shipbuilding programme and the abolition of sixty-nine obsolete men-of-war.

In August 1886, still retaining his seat in Parliament, he was appointed Junior Lord of the Admiralty by Lord Salisbury, a post obtained through his close friendship with the Prince of Wales.[1]

"No doubt you'll try to do a number of things," said his predecessor on turning over the office. "But you'll run up against a dead wall. Your sole business will be to sign papers."

Within a few weeks of his appointment, in September 1886, he had drawn up a memorandum on war organisation which was laid before the Board of Admiralty. It drew attention to various matters in which the Navy was not only deficient, but unprepared for any great national emergency. In particular, it strongly advocated the formation of a thinking branch in the shape of a Naval Intelligence Department, whose main object would be the drawing up of war plans and immediate readiness for war.

There is no doubt that most of Lord Charles's suggested reforms were badly needed; but his colleagues would have none of them. Steeped in the tradition of Trafalgar, over-confident after long years of naval peace, they considered that most of his statements were exaggerated, and that, as the Junior Lord of the Admiralty, a captain who had not even commanded a ship in a fleet, he lacked the necessary experience to make his opinions of value, and was meddling with matters of high policy which were no concern of his.

Undeterred by their resistance, however, he showed his memorandum to the Prime Minister—Lord Salisbury—with the concurrence of the First Lord.

The Prime Minister observed that he was being asked to adopt suggestions against the opinion of the Board of Admiralty. Beresford, however, stuck to his guns, and asked him not to cast aside his proposals as useless until he had consulted three senior admirals, whose opinions coincided with his own. Lord Salisbury did so, and, sending for Lord Charles a week later,

[1] *King Edward VII*, Vol. I., p. 530.

told him that the Admiralty had decided to form a Naval Intelligence Department on the lines suggested. It consisted of a senior captain as director and two assistants, one of whom, Captain R. N. Custance, now Admiral Sir Reginald Custance, G.C.B., K.C.M.G., C.V.O., D.C.L., has kindly written the Foreword to this book.

From this small beginning was finally evolved the trained Naval Staff of the present day, whose duty it is to consider in detail the many aspects of naval war, and the readiness of the Navy for any eventuality.

As the Junior Lord of the Admiralty, and, at the same time, a Member of Parliament, Lord Charles was certainly a thorn in the sides of his naval superiors. While they were complacent and had persuaded the government that all was well with the Navy, he, with other naval officers and a considerable section of the public, was convinced that great reforms were urgently needed. The strength of the Navy was inadequate for its function in war. There were no considered plans of campaign at the Admiralty, no system of liaison with the War Office in the event of hostilities.

On attempting to rectify matters, as his predecessor had prophesied, he found himself up against a brick wall. Rebellious by nature, however, and convinced that he was in the right, he still continued to press his reforms, at a time, it must be admitted, which was not altogether opportune.

'With breezy indifference to ministerial conventions,' as Sir Sidney Lee wrote in his biography of King Edward, Beresford 'was urging on his colleagues, not only in the council chamber but also in the Press and on the platform, heroic developments of the Navy, which the Treasury regarded as costly extravagances.'[1] Moreover, he seemed to be in closer touch with the world of newspapers than was considered fitting for a member of the Board, and much internal friction at the Admiralty followed.

The upshot came in January 1888, when, as a protest against the parsimony of the Treasury in cutting down the salaries of the officers of the newly constituted Intelligence Department, Lord Charles thought fit to resign his naval appointment in order to carry on his campaign for naval reform as a private member of the House of Commons.

Rather ill-advisedly, he initiated a vigorous crusade in the House against the government and Board of Admiralty. It was an attack which even his great friend, the Prince of Wales,

[1] *King Edward VII*, Vol I., p. 563.

considered inopportune, though His Royal Highness 'harboured no doubt of the justice of his friend's aims.'

'You will *never* get any real reforms with the *present* Board of Admiralty,' the Prince wrote to him on July 9th, 1888, 'and nobody knows that better than yourself.'[1]

'You should apply for a ship before long,' His Royal Highness also wrote on July 11th, 'so that you may put in your sea time,'[2] and was none too pleased when Lord Charles, refusing to take the advice, delayed his withdrawal from politics for another year in order to stiffen the provisions of the Naval Defence Act of 1889. The Act, when finally passed, provided for the construction of ten battleships, forty-two cruisers, and eighteen torpedo-craft in four and a half years, at a total cost of £21,500,000.

Appointed to the *Undaunted*, a modern, twin-screw cruiser of 5,600 tons, in November 1889, Lord Charles remained in command of her on the Mediterranean Station until early in 1893. Little occurred of interest during this period, except the *Undaunted's* salving of the French corvette *Seignelay*, which drove ashore near Jaffa during a gale of wind on April 26th, 1891. Receiving the news two days later, Lord Charles hurried to the spot with his ship, to find the Frenchman high up on a sandy beach, in which she was embedded for five and a half feet.

The *Seignelay* had already been given up for lost ; but, after lightening her by removing 450 tons of ammunition and miscellaneous stores in forty-four hours, Beresford, with the assistance of two other vessels, finally succeeded in towing her safely off into deep water. For his service in saving the vessel from almost certain loss, he was afterwards presented with a Sèvres vase by the French government.

July 1893, saw him appointed captain of the Steam Reserve at Chatham. Here, as the admiral superintendent's executive officer, he was responsible for all vessels in the port under construction or repair, and also took command of new ships during their trials, and was required to satisfy himself that all work given out to contract had been completed according to specification. The appointment terminated in March 1896, when, though not a Member of Parliament, he again occupied himself with questions of naval reform which need hardly be enumerated here. In August 1897, having reached the top of the list of post-captains, he was promoted, in his turn, to the rank of rear-admiral.

[1] *King Edward VII*, Vol. I., p. 563. [2] Ibid., p. 531.

Brilliant though his services had been in Egypt, it must be recognised that since his promotion to lieutenant in 1868, his career had not been very exacting. He had had little of the drudgery of the Service which had to be put up with by officers with no private means or influence, who spent most of their lives at sea. Of these twenty-nine years he had spent about nine in four sea-going ships, the *Galatea*, *Thunderer*, *Condor*, and *Undaunted*, and three years in command of the royal yacht *Osborne*, which can scarcely be accounted a seagoing command. A further seven years had been spent in shore appointments, and ten months on Lord Wolseley's staff during the campaign in the Soudan. He had, therefore, been from eight to nine years upon half pay, a portion of the time as a Member of Parliament.

Undoubtedly he had been fortunate—fortunate in having private means and being independent of the Service for his livelihood ; luckier still in having the necessary influence in high places which enabled him to pick and choose his appointments. At the end of 1897, moreover, having been asked to stand for York in the Conservative interest, he was again in Parliament by the narrow majority of eleven votes.

9

In August 1898, having been invited by the Associated Chambers of Commerce of Great Britain to proceed to China 'to obtain accurate information as to how security is to be ensured to commercial men who may be disposed to embark their capital in trade enterprise in China,' Lord Charles sailed for the Far East. He arrived at Pekin in October, and, visiting the officials of the Tsung-li-Yamen, a body created many years before for the purpose of conducting diplomatic negotiations with the representatives of foreign Powers, was asked by its members to draw up a detailed scheme for the reorganisation of the Chinese military forces. In accordance with their desire he inspected various Chinese armies, including that of Yuan Shih Kai, and also visited the Chinese fleet, subsequently drawing up a comprehensive list of suggestions for their improvement.

In his capacity as representative of the Associated Chambers of Commerce of Great Britain, he toured most of the important places where there were British communities and British interests. As a result, he produced a series of elaborate reports and suggested reforms, subsequently included in his

book, *The Break-up of China*. They need hardly be entered into here. January 11th, 1889, found him in Japan for a short visit, prior to voyaging across the Pacific to San Francisco, where he arrived on February 10th.

In the United States he addressed many meetings on the subjects of extending trade in China and the necessity for pursuing the policy of the 'Open Door,' visiting, among a number of smaller towns, the cities of Denver, Chicago, Buffalo, Washington, and New York. Received everywhere with the greatest hospitality, deluged with invitations, and dogged by newspaper reporters, his tour was nearly a triumphal progress across the American continent. 'Everywhere,' he wrote in his memoirs, 'there were Irishmen, rushing to shake hands with a countryman; rushing any distance, often hundreds of miles, just to exchange greetings at the latter end. Irishmen are so, the world over.'

He returned to England in the summer of 1899, and December of the same year saw him appointed second-in-command of the Mediterranean Fleet, then under the command of Vice-Admiral Sir John Fisher, K.C.B. Resigning his seat for York, he accordingly hoisted his flag in H.M.S. *Ramillies* on January 12th, 1900. His first command as a rear-admiral more or less coincided with the final disappearance from the Royal Navy of the old training in masts and sails, in which all the officers and men of his generation had been carefully nurtured.

They had taken a long time in dying out. As late as in December 1898, naval cadets passing out of the training ship *Britannia* were still examined in sail-drill and the manœuvring of sailing ships, while in the autumn of 1902, sailing sloops and brigs were still attached to the boys' training ships for the instruction of young seamen.

In 1900, apart from being charged with carrying out the orders of the commander-in-chief, the second-in-command had no executive responsibility. During the two years he remained in this appointment, however, Lord Charles worked in harmony with Sir John Fisher, and proved himself an able and energetic flag-officer, though it is true he earned a rebuke from the Admiralty for the technical fault of allowing the publication in the Press of a letter highly critical of Admiralty policy.

In 1902, elected for Woolwich, he was once more urging his naval reforms in the House of Commons; but resigned his seat in February 1903, on being offered the command of the Channel Fleet, then consisting of six battleships, two armoured

and three smaller cruisers. He had been promoted to vice-admiral in October 1902, and hoisted his flag in the *Majestic* on April 17th, 1903, turning over to the *Cæsar* in the following February.

He worked his fleet hard, making it a rule never to go to sea, or to steam from port to port, without carrying out some exercise or tactical problem on the way. But he was always accessible to his captains, always ready to give praise where praise is due; to rule, indeed, by commendation, rather than by condemnation. He introduced various innovations for the general benefit of officers and men, particularly in the matter of leave, and, while maintaining strict discipline, did not render himself so aloof as to be nothing but a mere potentate. His officers and men saw him and knew him and loved him. They trusted him implicitly, and he had the happy knack of winning their devoted loyalty without obvious effort.

He hauled down his flag on the Atlantic Fleet (which the 'Channel Fleet' had been renamed in the previous December) on March 5th, 1905, but was not to remain unemployed for very long. In June of the same year, forty-four years after serving in the Mediterranean flagship as a midshipman, he hoisted his flag in the *Bulwark* as acting-admiral and commander-in-chief of the Mediterranean Fleet. His actual promotion to admiral came in 1906.

Sir John Fisher's drastic redistribution of fleets had already concentrated most of the British naval strength in home waters in anticipation of a war with Germany. The Mediterranean Fleet, considerably reduced in numbers, was no longer the premier fleet of Britain. None the less, it was an important command, and Lord Charles did much to improve its efficiency and well-being. It is unnecessary, however, here to describe the everyday routine and incidents of a peacetime command, until on January 19th, 1907, he sailed from Malta for England in his flagship.

After a short trip to Mexico in connection with the property of his late brother, Lord Delaval, March 4th, 1907, saw him appointed commander-in-chief of the Channel Fleet, then the most powerful British fleet in existence. His flag was hoisted in H.M.S. *King Edward VII* on April 16th, 1907.

The next two years was a period of difficult uncertainty. Sir John Fisher was at the helm as First Sea Lord. He was busy with his reforms and regrouping of fleets, and it soon became notorious that many of his changes of policy had not the sympathy of Lord Charles, who regarded them as dangerous

to the security of the country. 'An extraordinary confusion prevailed at the Admiralty,' Beresford wrote in his *Memoirs*, and economies in the Naval estimates of 1907, of which the First Sea Lord approved, gave Lord Charles and others the opportunity for an attack upon the Admiralty's 'policy.'

Beresford declared in public that the naval programme did not suffice the needs of the nation, and that Germany's plans for invasion were complete. Fisher, confident in his new *Dreadnought* and his regrouping of the fleet, considered the agitation utterly unjustified, and seems to have harboured the suspicion that there was a conspiracy to oust him from office and constitute Beresford 'admiralissimo.'

In our memoir of Lord Fisher we have already touched upon the quarrel between two great seamen which tended to divide the Navy into two opposing factions and to undermine its loyalty and discipline. We need hardly enter into full details here; but both Fisher and Beresford were personal friends of King Edward's, both were public characters, and both held their own strong opinions. It was regrettable that their opinions so rarely coincided. The many orders and counter-orders in the constitution of the fleets in home waters only served to increase Beresford's irritation.

'When the Home Fleet was finally constituted in March 1907,' he wrote, 'there were no less than three commanders-in-chief in home waters. . . . In time of war the supreme command was to be exercised by me, over the whole number of fighting vessels, 244 in all. But in time of peace they could not be trained or exercised together. . . .'[1]

The situation, as Beresford saw it, 'was fraught with difficulties so complex, and potential dangers to the country so palpable, that many of my friends urged me to resign my command in the public interest. I decided, however, that I should best serve His Majesty the King, the Navy, and the country by remaining at my post.'

The tension grew, and during Beresford's absence in Norwegian waters in the summer of 1908, he became the subject of a violent attack in the Press and in Parliament for the reason that he was alleged to have endangered the fleet during manœuvres. He was unable to reply at the time, but the allegations were afterwards discovered to be unfounded.

On February 15th, 1909, it was suddenly announced that Lord Charles Beresford would vacate the command of the Channel Fleet the following month, after two years' service

[1] *Memoirs*, p. 552.

LORD CHARLES BERESFORD
BARON BERESFORD OF METEMMEH AND CURRAGHMORE
Aetat 61

instead of the normal three. There seems little doubt that the real reason for his removal was his unpopularity with the First Sea Lord, who saw in him a powerful and influential opponent to his policy of reform. However, in December 1908, Sir John Fisher had written to Lord Knollys : ' Beresford's removal is a purely administrative act, carried out entirely on the First Lord's own initiative and on his sole responsibility, with the full sanction of the Prime Minister. . . . McKenna, as a pure civilian, saw the unfitness of Beresford for war command and must get rid of him, so he invented the two years' letter, applying to both Beresford and Bridgeman, so that the three fleets at home . . . are . . . now made two-year appointments.' [1]

Sir John Fisher's remark as to the unfitness of Beresford for war command was not altogether just. There can be no possible doubt, however, that Lord Charles had acted with rash impetuosity in publicly voicing his disagreement with Admiralty policy. He would have done better to have remained silent and have bided his time, for from a man of Fisher's explosive temperament, a man who prided himself on being ' ruthless, relentless, and remorseless ' in quelling opposition, he could only expect drastic reprisals.

So on March 24th, 1909, Lord Charles's flag came fluttering down at Portsmouth for the last time. ' Few events in my life have touched me more deeply,' he wrote, ' than the presence of so many of my old shipmates among the crowds which assembled upon Portsmouth Hard when I came on shore after hauling down my flag, and which filled Waterloo Station and its approaches when I arrived in London.'

Immediately on coming ashore he challenged the whole policy of the Board of Admiralty in a lengthy document addressed to the Prime Minister, Mr. Asquith. The allegations were so grave that the Prime Minister appointed a sub-committee of the Committee of Imperial Defence to enquire into the matter. Fisher, regarding the appointment of the committee as another opportunity for Beresford to attack him, became thoroughly exasperated and threatened to resign, but was persuaded to remain in office by the special desire of King Edward.

On August 13th, 1909, after twelve meetings at which Lord Charles Beresford and the Admiralty presented their cases, the sub-committee reported that there was no dangerous deficiency in naval strength, and that no danger to the country had

[1] *King Edward VII*, Vol. II., p. 601.

resulted from the Admiralty's preparations for possible war. Nevertheless, in certain respects, the wording of the report seemed to justify certain of Lord Charles's criticisms, while the arrangements had been hampered by the lack of 'cordial relations between Lord Charles Beresford and the Admiralty. It was intimated that there were faults on both sides. . . .'[1]

Elected Member of Parliament for Portsmouth in 1910, Lord Charles continued his campaign in the House of Commons. He retired from the Navy in 1911, and the next year published his views on the policy and reforms inaugurated by Lord Fisher, in a volume entitled *The Betrayal*.

Appointed Honorary Colonel of the Royal Marine Brigade of the Royal Naval Division soon after the outbreak of the Great War, he retained his seat until his elevation to the peerage in 1916 as Baron Beresford of Metemmeh and Curraghmore. He died on September 6th, 1919, at the age of seventy-three, a G.C.B., G.C.V.O., Grand Cordon of the Turkish Order of the Medjidie, Grand Cross of the Order of the Redeemer of Greece, and the possessor of the Legion of Honour of France and the Order of St. Olaf of Norway. He was a D.C.L. of Oxford University and an LL.D. of Liverpool, and had been awarded three medals for saving life. There being no son, the peerage became extinct.

10

Personally brave, high-spirited, and an enthusiastic sportsman, Lord Charles Beresford was one of the best known sailors of his day, certainly one of the most popular. Compared with some of his contemporaries, he served only a short time afloat up till his promotion to rear-admiral in 1897. From the end of 1899 until 1909, however, he was almost continuously employed in important commands at sea, and proved himself an able and active flag-officer who maintained and advanced the fighting efficiency of his fleets. He did not hesitate to delegate authority, and, by awarding praise when it was deserved and by his personal interest in his officers and men, had the happy knack of winning the devoted service and loyalty of those who served with him.

Essentially a man of action, he was passionately devoted to the Royal Navy and to his country, and though the latter portion of his career was marred by his antipathy to Lord Fisher and his reforms, he resisted them not through any

[1] *King Edward VII*, Vol. II., p. 603.

feelings of self-aggrandisement, but because he considered himself to be working in the best interests of the Service which he loved. And if Beresford made mistakes through his impetuosity, obstinacy, and impatience of control, Lord Fisher cannot altogether be absolved from the blame. The quarrel was caused by the clash of two strong wills, two dominant personalities, both working, though in different directions, for what they considered was best for the Navy and the country.

Lord Charles, though not strong in argument, was a forceful and attractive speaker, though his natural impulsiveness and occasional want of tact sometimes served him badly. His attacks were often ill-advised and inopportune, his statements in public occasionally reckless, and nobody was more aware of it than King Edward, who remained his personal friend almost to the close of his reign.

It was Mr. Winston Churchill, the First Lord of the Admiralty, who, on December 20th, 1912, referred in the following terms to Lord Charles Beresford during a debate brought about by the retirement of Admiral Sir Francis Bridgeman from the post of First Sea Lord.

'I am not one of those who take the Noble Lord too seriously. I know him too well. He does not mean to be as offensive as he often is when speaking on public platforms. He is one of those orators of whom it was well said : "Before they get up, they do not know what they are going to say ; when they are speaking, they do not know what they are saying ; and when they have sat down, they do not know what they have said. . . ." Harm is done, and has been done often abroad in other countries, by the reckless statements which he makes about the Navy and about naval administration, which he has not only made against me and the Board of which I am a member, but which he has made against my predecessors and all the Boards, including those under which he has served and of which he was a member. . . . Under a genial manner—and I warn the House of this—which is very attractive to the House at large . . . the Noble Lord nourishes many bitter animosities on naval matters. . . .[1]

These were bitter words ; but were not altogether undeserved. Moreover, besides attacking naval policy in general, Lord Charles had aimed a more personal attack against Mr. Churchill himself.

Lord Charles's undoubted love of publicity and impatience

[1] *Hansard.*

of control on many occasions, sometimes led him into conduct which was at variance with the strict traditions of the Service. Like many another man of action, he had his faults. Financially independent of the Navy, born, as it were, with a golden spoon in his mouth, he had opportunities of advancement and distinction vouchsafed to few of his naval contemporaries.

Nevertheless, he proved himself worthy. By those who knew him as a shipmate and a leader of men, he was loved and respected, and though he was not granted the supreme chance of commanding a fleet in action, those early episodes in the *Condor* and *Safieh* showed that he was endowed with some of the attributes of a Nelson.

It was Lord Wolseley who aptly summed up his fighting character, by describing him as 'an officer whose readiness and resource and ability as a leader were only equalled by his daring'—and Lord Wolseley was right.

Like Cochrane's, Beresford's fertility of resource in the hour of stress and danger was only equalled by his personal courage and daring. Like Cochrane, he was at his best in action.

It is a tribute to his memory that we find difficulty in thinking of him as Lord Beresford of Metemmeh and Curraghmore. To many of us he remains Lord Charles Beresford, or—in the more familiar and affectionate parlance of the Royal Navy—'Charlie B.'